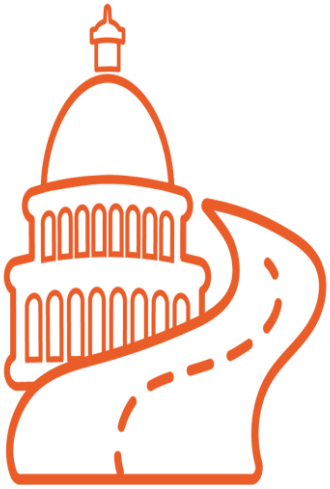
NATIONAL COUNCIL for Mental Wellbeing



12/4/24

Road to the 119th Congress

Welcome to the third edition of the Road to the 119th Congress. Every other week between now and January 2025, we're tracking the results of the Nov. 5 election and updating you about federal legislative and regulatory policy, the appropriations processes, potential appointments and priorities throughout the change from the 118th to 119th Congress.

Note: This message supplements CapCon, our weekly federal policy and regulatory update.

2024 Election Update

- **Final House race called:** Democrats officially won the last outstanding House race Dec. 3, cementing the Republicans' control of the House with 220 Republican seats to Democrats' 215. However, President-elect Trump's nominations of three Republican House

members as members of his administration will likely result in a 217-215 majority for a few months — or at least until special elections are held. Special elections for two vacated seats in Florida will take place on April 1, while a date for the special election to fill Rep. Elise Stefanik's seat in New York has yet to be determined. This balance could potentially require more bipartisan negotiations in the House during the first 100 days of the new Congress and administration.

119th Congressional Leadership Update

- **Senate Democrats elect key leadership positions:** On Dec. 3, Senate Democrats elected Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-NY) as incoming Senate Minority Leader. Sen. Dick Durbin (D-IL) was reelected as Senate Democratic Whip. Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) will replace outgoing Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) as chair of the Democratic Policy and Communications Committee, and Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ) will chair the Democratic Steering and Outreach Committee.
- **Some key House Committee leadership remains in flux:** Two Republican representatives are vying for chair of the House Energy and Commerce (E&C) Committee, which oversees public health and other initiatives: Reps. Brett Guthrie (R-KY-02) and Bob Latta (R-OH-05). Guthrie has been Chair of the E&C Committee's Subcommittee on Health during the 118th Congress, and Latta has experience on all E&C's subcommittees.

Incoming Trump Administration Appointments Update

- **HHS Deputy Secretary:** Jim O'Neill, former HHS official during the George W. Bush administration, was nominated last week. If confirmed, O'Neill will oversee the Department's daily operations, regulatory processes and inter-agency coordination — potentially playing a pivotal role in advancing the administration's health care

agenda. Dive deeper into O'Neill's health policy stances over the years.

- **CDC Director:** Dave Weldon, MD, former Florida congressman, was nominated last week. If confirmed, Weldon would report to presumptive incoming HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.
- **DEA Administrator:** The nominee, Florida sheriff Chad Chronister, withdrew his name from the nomination process, citing the gravity of the role. Derek Maltz, the former head of the agency's special operations division, and Ray Donovan, its former chief of operations, are both rumored to be possible replacements.
- **FDA Commissioner:** Marty Makary, MD, a surgeon, was nominated. Politico goes into detail on his experience.
- **NIH Director:** Jay Bhattacharya, MD, was nominated to lead the National Institutes of Health. Read more about his experience and public stances.

Government Funding Outlook Before January

- As they wrap up the 118th Congress, House and Senate leaders have begun negotiating a continuing resolution (CR). A CR generally provides stopgap funding to keep the federal government operating for a specified period of time. The latest reporting indicates many House conservatives, including Speaker Johnson, want a funding deal lasting until late March. But several appropriators disagree, pushing for the funding patch to expire sooner to devote more time to work on FY26 funding before a late April deadline that could trigger cuts across the board. An agreement is expected before the government runs out of money on Dec. 20. Other funding priorities expected to progress alongside a CR are a disaster relief package and a year-long Farm Bill extension.

- The prospect of a year-end health care package remains uncertain. A number of health programs that are set to expire on Dec. 31 are being discussed in the negotiation process, including certain provisions from the SUPPORT Act that weren't reauthorized back in March. Congress could look to extend these programs to match the duration of their CR, then essentially start the negotiations over in the new Congress. Thorn Run Partners published an analysis on the relevant health care extenders.
- These negotiations are fluid. The National Council continues to work with our Congressional champions to find opportunities to secure support for mental health and substance use disorder initiatives in the remainder of the 118th Congress.

Throwback Video of the Day

Travel back in time to 2016, where Dr. Mehmet Oz, now nominee for incoming CMS Administrator, touted the benefits of Mental Health First Aid.

If you have any questions or feedback on the contents of Road to the 119th, contact our policy team.

In the meantime, sign up for the National Council's advocacy platform today and stay up to date on opportunities to make your voice heard.

We'll see you back here for part four in our series on **Dec. 18.**

Sincerely,
National Council Policy and Advocacy Team

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