



12/18/24

Road to the 119th Congress

Welcome to the fourth edition of the Road to the 119th Congress. Every other week between now and Inauguration Day 2025, we're tracking the results of the 2024 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.

Government Funding Outlook:

- **Lawmakers release continuing resolution (CR) bill text including key healthcare provisions:** The House is currently considering a CR and legislative package that would fund the government through mid-March. Several key mental health and substance use-related programs that National Council and our allies advocated for are also included in the package, though they are at risk of being removed in the ongoing negotiations.
- **Advocacy opportunity:** [Take two minutes and send a letter to your representatives](#) urging them to keep the below health provisions in the package.
- The CR would extend a number of these programs beyond March 2025, such as:

- **A 5-year reauthorization of the SUPPORT Act, including the following provisions among others:**
 - Substance Use Treatment and Recovery Loan Repayment Program (STAR-LRP)
 - Building Communities of Recovery (BCOR) program
 - Peer technical assistance center, including the creation of a pilot program for a regional TA center as an internal triage system to supplement the national center
 - Comprehensive opioid recovery centers
 - Residential treatment programs for pregnant and postpartum women
 - Youth prevention and recovery grant program
- **A 2-year extension of pandemic-era Medicare telehealth flexibilities:**
 - Extension of the waiver of in-person requirements for behavioral health services
 - Waiver of geographic and “originating site” requirements
 - Extension of expanded covered services, including physical and occupational therapy, emergency department visits, and nursing facility care
 - Extension of expanded “distant site” telehealth providers
 - Coverage of audio-only services
- **A 2-year extension of the National Health Service Corps:**
 - Annual funding of \$350 million through the end of 2026.
- **A 2.5% payment boost for doctors in Medicare:**
 - The 2.5% increase partially offsets the 2.83% cut implemented by the CY2025 Physician Fee Schedule.
- A full summary of all health-related provisions is [available here](#). The full bill text of the entire legislative package is [available here](#).
- **Next steps:** To avoid a government shutdown, the House will need to vote on the package and then send it to the Senate for a vote prior to Friday at midnight. If they don’t meet that deadline, a brief lapse in funding would commence, though it would likely be resolved within hours.

119th Congressional Leadership Update

- **Brett Guthrie (R-Ky.) to chair House Energy & Commerce Committee:** The Kentucky Republican will take over committee leadership duties from outgoing Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-Wash.). The committee legislates on issues including Medicare, Medicaid and public health. Rep. Guthrie previously

chaired the panel's Health Subcommittee and has introduced or cosponsored several key mental health and substance use related bills supported by National Council during his tenure in Congress, especially related to SUD care and telehealth. Rep. Frank Pallone (D-NJ) will remain as Ranking Member.

- **New GOP members of House Appropriations Committee announced:** House appropriations chair Tom Cole (R-Ok.) announced five new GOP additions to the appropriations committee. The committee oversees HHS funding as per the annual appropriations process. In total, the committee will expand by three seats, two Republicans and one Democrat (to be named). New GOP members replacing outgoing members are:
 - Mark Alford, MO
 - Nick LaLota, NY
 - Dale Strong, AL
 - Celeste Maloy, UT
 - Riley Moore, WV
- **New Dem additions to key behavioral health-related committees yet to be confirmed**

Key Upcoming Dates

- **January 3:** 118th Congress adjourns, 119th Congress sworn in. Freshman Members of Congress hold an informal "Open House" where their doors are open for introduction.
- **Early-mid-January:** House Speaker elections, committee rosters confirmed, first hearings expected to begin.
- **January 20:** Presidential inauguration.
- **Mid-March:** If the funding package currently being debated passes, government funding will again face a cliff on March 14.

Incoming Trump Administration Appointments Update

- HHS Secretary Nominee Robert F. Kennedy Junior meets with dozens of Senators and their staff this week ahead of a potentially contentious confirmation cycle. Per *Politico*, his main message to lawmakers is to implement an agenda to fight chronic disease and causes of childhood illness. A recent [Washington Post analysis](#) tracked where Senators stand on his nomination so far.

Combined 2025 Congressional Calendar

- Both the Senate and House released their working days calendar for the new year. Please see a [combined calendar](#) noting when each chamber is in and out of session in 2025.

Happy Holidays

- The National Council is incredibly grateful for the work you do every day and for our collaboration to amplify the voices and needs of the mental health and substance use care communities. We hope you and yours enjoy the Holidays and New Year's celebrations!

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 five** in our series the **first week of January**.

Sincerely,

National Council Policy and Advocacy Team