
LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

January 13, 2020

Liz Lyons, Director of Advocacy and Government Affairs ext.4139

FEDERAL

Congress

The Senate will be in session next week, and the House will join them through Thursday.

Last week's legislative report provided a comprehensive analysis of FY 2020 funding measures that were agreed to late-December, months after the beginning of the fiscal year (Oct. 1). The process of finding bipartisan support for all discretionary spending programs is arduous at best, which is why President Donald Trump plans to release his FY 2021 budget proposal to Congress on Feb. 10. While the president's budget recommendations are non-binding, it is the unofficial kick-off event for appropriations processes on the Hill.

Hearings this week:

- House E&C, Oversight Subcommittee Hearing- [“A Public Health Emergency: State Efforts to Curb the Opioid Crisis.”](#) Jan. 14, 2020 at 9:00am (CST);
- Committee on Homeland Security- [“Addressing the Adequacy of DHS Efforts to Prevent Child Deaths in Custody.”](#) Jan. 14, 2020 at 9:00am (CST);
- E&C Health Subcommittee- [“Cannabis Policies For the New Decade.”](#) Jan. 15, 2020 at 9:00am (CST).

Last week, the House E&C Committee held a hearing on [“Legislation to Improve Americans' Health Care Coverage and Outcomes,”](#) that included a number of bills being monitored by Children's including:

- [H.R. 1379](#), the “Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act,” which requires all individual and group market health plans to cover medically necessary treatment resulting from congenital abnormalities;
- [H.R. 2271](#), the “Scarlett's Sunshine on Sudden Unexpected Death Act,” improves investigations, data collection, and research into SIDS;
- [H.R. 2468](#), the “School-Based Allergies and Asthma Management Program Act,” which provides incentives to schools to help prevent and treat asthma and allergy related emergencies;
- [H.R. 3935](#), the “Protecting Patients Transportation to Care Act,” which will ensure that some of the most vulnerable will continue to be able to access the care they need through Medicaid, regardless of where they live;
- [H.R. 4801](#), the “Healthy Start Reauthorization Act of 2019,” which will enhance programs that support perinatal health, reduce infant mortality and improve long-term health outcomes.

As previously reported, Nebraska U.S. Senator Ben Sasse has been appointed to the Senate Finance Committee this year- a great opportunity to elevate health care issues with a Nebraska champion seated on the committee.

STATE

Nebraska Legislature

Monday, January 13 is Day 4 in the Nebraska Legislature and lawmakers will resume full-day debate on bills carried over from last session. The first bill on the agenda, [LB147](#), will likely take lawmakers well into the afternoon with passionate debate.

The Student Discipline Act proposes to give teachers and administrators the ability to physically restrain children who are a harm to themselves or others, among other provisions. The bill was brought to the Chairman of the Education

Committee Mike Groene (R-Dist. 42, North Platte) by the teacher's association as a way to protect themselves and their students.

Also this week, Governor Pete Ricketts (R-NE) will deliver his State of the State address. There is approximately \$126 million in excess revenue to spend in the current two-year budget cycle and it is expected the governor will introduce his priorities for the extra funding this session. Those priorities are likely to be- an increase in funding to the property tax relief credit fund, flood relief and recovery funding and money towards corrections to address prison overcrowding. The extra funding has become a vehicle for many priorities across the body and conflicting views are imminent.

Legislative bills will continue to be introduced until Day 10 (Jan. 23). As each bill is read and considered, the Children's bill watch list will continue to update. Senators will debate carryover bills from last session each morning beginning at 9am and break at Noon for lunch; Debate will resume again at 1:30pm. Beginning Jan. 21, public hearings on all new legislation will begin in their assigned committees at 1:30pm and debate will continue during the morning hours.

If you would like to follow along during session, visit www.nebraskalegislature.gov and livestream debate or public hearings on the NETV app at the bottom of the screen.

Key Dates:

- January 13- Begin debate of carry over legislation
- January 15- Governor Rickett's State of the State Address- 10am
- January 17- Legislative recess day
- January 21- Public hearings begin at 1:30pm
- January 23- Last day of bill introduction
- February 19- Deadline to request a Speaker priority designation
- February 21- Deadline for committee and senator priority bills
- February 25- Speaker priority bills announced
- February 27- Final day of committee hearings
- March 3- Full-day floor debate begins
- March 18- Late night schedules begin
- April 23- Sine Die Adjournment

Nebraska Medicaid

Announced late-Monday, Nebraska Medicaid Director Dr. Matthew Van Patton will resign effective Feb. 7. Van Patton's largest undertaking has been delivering Medicaid expansion following the ballot decision Nov. 2018. Last December, Nebraska Medicaid submitted an 1115 waiver to allow the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to institute work requirements in a tiered benefit program. Nebraska is currently in a 30-day public comment period on the waiver proposal. Medicaid expansion is expected to go live for nearly 100,000 adults by Oct. 1, 2020.

Effective Feb. 7, Jeremy Brunssen, Deputy Director of Finance and Program Integrity, will serve as interim director. Governor Ricketts' search for the next MLTC Director has commenced.

Douglas County

Last week, a new hotline was announced aiming to reduce school violence. The Safef2Help NE hotline is meant to report threatening or concerning behavior through the website, app or by calling 531-299-7233. Tips reported via the hotline can be shared with officials from 186 schools in six districts across Douglas County. It also easily includes law enforcement when necessary. Sarpy County has its own threat assessment group, including an anonymous tip line for members of the community. This hotline has been a goal of the Douglas County Threat Advisory Team, a group comprised of mental health professionals, school districts and law enforcement.

(Sources: CHA, OWH, LJS, Nebraskalegislature.gov, Peetz & Co., Nebraska Chamber)