

This Week in Health Care Reform: July 16, 2010

Congressional Democrats met with President Obama this week to discuss their scheduled legislative business before the August recess. Meanwhile, as the elections draw near, Republicans are firming up their campaign agenda and reinforcing the need for checks and balances in Washington, hoping that voters will hear the message and support their cause in November.

As opportunities arise during implementation of the health care reform legislation, we encourage you and others to engage members of Congress by visiting the [Health Action Network](#).

Health Care Reform

Republicans Demand Hearing to Examine New Appointee: On Monday, Dr. Donald [Berwick](#) was sworn in as the next administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). However, Republican leaders are calling for a hearing to examine his views and plans for implementing the health care reform law. In a [letter](#) to Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-MT), all 10 Republican members of the committee argue that Dr. [Berwick](#) needs to answer questions regarding his statements in support of the British health care system and the rationing of care.

Committee [Republicans](#) wrote in the letter, “The need for Dr. Berwick to be considered in a transparent and deliberative manner is all the more important because the agency will be responsible for numerous and significant changes to federal health programs including the largest Medicaid coverage expansion since the program’s creation.” They go on to say, “Furthermore, this recess appointment will have imposed an injustice on Dr. Berwick himself if it results in preventing him from being able to answer the legitimate questions raised about his nomination.”

New Rules on Electronic Health Records: Administration officials issued a new [set](#) of rules on Tuesday providing hospitals and doctors with a financial incentive to computerize patient’s health [records](#). The new rules are far less stringent than the original proposals released by Administration officials in January. Starting next [year](#), the federal government is providing \$27 billion over the next 10 years to reward doctors and hospitals for installing [electronic](#) health systems. Doctors can get up to \$44,000 from Medicare and \$63,750 from Medicaid, while [hospitals](#) will be eligible for at least \$2 million depending on their size and number of patient discharges. In 2015, government [officials](#) will begin reducing payments to hospitals and doctors who are not using electronic health records.

Public Opinion

Most Americans Disapprove of Health Care Reform Law: According to a recent [CBS News poll](#), 49 percent of Americans disapprove of the health care reform law – support for the law has dropped 7 points in the past two months.

President Obama Getting Lower Marks: In a recent [Washington Post/ABC News poll](#), 50 percent of Americans disapprove of the job President Obama is doing on health care reform, while 51 percent would rather have Republicans in charge of Congress to “act as a check on the President and his agenda.”

Looking Ahead

With just two weeks left before a five-week summer recess, House Democrats are switching focus from health care reform to job creation legislation in an effort to show voters they are committed to bringing the nation out of this recession. Republicans remain united in their opposition to the health care reform law and plan to leverage that in the upcoming elections.