

HORIZON HIGHLIGHT

December 2024

The time between Election Day in November and when new officials take office in January is called the "lame duck" session. Lame duck refers to the final weeks of office for politicians who lost re-election or chose not to run again. Today, we use the term "lame duck" to describe any meeting of the entire Congress that occurs between election and swearing in.

If you would like to learn more about this year's lame duck session, please contact Jennifer Steger at jsteger@horizondc.com

The Lame Duck Agenda of 2024

The items on the timeline below represent a mix of both "must-pass," which are necessary to avoid funding lapses or program expirations, and "may-pass" legislation which aren't necessary, but are considered "big ticket" items to address before Congress adjourns.

November 12 - Lame Duck Session Begins

Passing Appropriations

Appropriations bills fund the federal government on an annual basis. Government funding is set to expire on December 20. In order to avoid a government shutdown, Congress is likely to pass either a short-term continuing resolution (CR) into early 2025 or federal funding through September 30, 2025.

Processing the NDAA

The *National Defense Authorization Act* (NDAA) is an annual piece of legislation that approves funding levels for the country's defense and military. To date, it has not been passed.

Judicial Nominations

The Senate can continue to approve judicial appointments during the lame duck session. This is an opportunity for the majority to confirm majority judges across the country while they still have control of the Senate.



Telehealth Flexibilities

Extending the telehealth flexibilities that were temporarily expanded during COVID-19 has been an ongoing process for the 118th Congress; they are set to expire at the end of the year. There are several bills in consideration to address this, some of which include pharmacy benefit manager reform as a pay-for.

2024 Health Care Extenders

Funding for specific programs is often tacked on to appropriations bills to ensure continued operation. These can include extenders for health policy programs, such as Community Health Centers, Graduate Medical Education, and the National Health Service Corps.



Medicare Physician Fee Schedule

For the fifth consecutive year, Medicare physicians are facing a pay cut - this year at a projected average of 2.93%. Congress is likely to approve a partial fix, as they have in the past, to mitigate cuts. Legislation has been introduced this year.

Disaster Funding

In light of the recent natural disasters, such as Hurricanes Helene and Milton, Congress can approve additional funding for ongoing urgent recovery efforts.

PBM Reform

Pharmacy Benefit Manager (PBM) reform has been a popular issue for the 118th Congress, specifically focused on transparency into the PBM market. There is potential for PBM reform to be included in an end-of-year bill as it is a pay-for.

December 20 - The 118th Congress is Scheduled to Adjourn

In 2025, Republicans are set to take control of both the House and Senate when the 119th Congress begins on January 3, and the President is sworn in on January 20.

Several potential legislative scenarios could happen between now and then, some of which are outlined above. But with so few legislative days left, the most likely scenario is a CR that pushes most policy and funding decisions to next year.