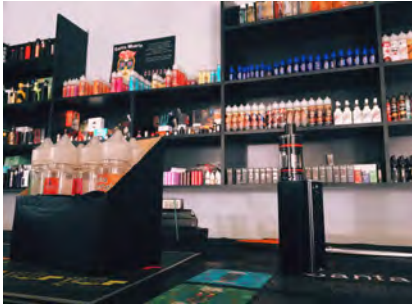




LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY
HEALTH

Institute for Health Policy and Leadership

Healthcare News At A Glance



National

Omnibus spending bill moves forward without reinsurance and cuts to abortion services through the ACA– Proposed by House and Senate Republicans, the legislature was drafted to contain a 3-year \$30 billion reinsurance plan to stabilize the insurance markets under the Affordable Care Act (ACA). The bill also would have created a path for allowing insurance companies to sell across state lines. The controversy over language that would prohibit ACA funds for abortion services led to the removal of the entire bill from the spending plan.

Cuts to the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program (TPPP) spark a lawsuit– Former president Obama's administration provided 5-year grants to over 80 institutions. While the grants were set to end in 2020, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) notified the agencies that the funding would be discontinued by June 2018. The \$200 million cuts have resulted in a lawsuit against the current administration.

Bipartisan bill to curb drug prices heads to Senate– Receiving support from Senators Ted Cruz (R-TX) and Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), the Creating and Restoring Equal Access to Equivalent Samples (CREATES) Act targets pharmaceutical company delay tactics that decrease access to generic drugs.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) seeks comments on limiting nicotine levels in cigarettes and flavoring in all tobacco products– Over the next 90 days, the FDA will be taking public comments on limiting cigarette nicotine levels to "non-addictive" amounts, from an average of 1.5 mg to 0.4 mg per cigarette. The FDA also welcomed public comments on the effects of flavorings in cigars and electronic cigarettes as well as suggestions on possible measures that can be taken. The Commissioner stated that tobacco use still kills close to half a million Americans every year.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Health Statistics

7.2%

Percentage of pregnant women who smoked cigarettes (2016 data). This is down from 10 percent in 2011.

16%

Percentage of adults who binge drink (8 drinks) roughly once every week.

9%

Percentage of Americans lacking health coverage (Jan-Sep 2017). Before the ACA, 16 percent of Americans lacked health coverage.

The National Health Interview Survey

Last week, the CDC published a report stating that obesity rates are increasing even though people are exercising more, with over 50 percent of Americans following the exercise recommendation of 150 minutes of moderate exercise a week.

California

California's Reproductive Freedom, Accountability, Comprehensive Care, and Transparency (FACT) Act is challenged at the Supreme Court– Passed in 2015, the law required “crisis pregnancy centers” to provide information to patients about abortion and contraception services that were funded by the state. The law was passed based on a report that the faith-based centers were using deception and scare tactics when discussing abortion versus other options with pregnant women. A Riverside County judge already ruled against the law on the basis that it violates the First Amendment. The Supreme Court is set to hear the case on Tuesday.

Influenza B cases start to rise in California– The California Department of Public Health reported that the incidence of influenza B cases is increasing dramatically. The Dean of UC Davis Health warns that the strain can increase chances of death by 20 percent in pediatric patients when compared to the influenza A strain.



Other States

Judge temporarily blocks Mississippi's 15-week abortion ban– The lawsuit was filed by the state's only abortion clinic on the grounds that states are prohibited from banning abortions of inviable fetuses (less than 20 weeks). A 20-week abortion bill failed in the US Senate in January.

Ohio's down syndrome abortion ban blocked– Governor Kasich (R-OH) passed a law in December that would prohibit women from getting an abortion if they were doing so because their unborn child was diagnosed with down syndrome. Ohio follows other states that have passed similar bills such as Louisiana and Indiana. After a federal judge blocked the bill last week, Ohio proposed another bill to ban all abortions with no exceptions.

Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court rules against brand-name drug makers– According to the law, generic drug makers must use the same label warnings as brand-name versions of the drug. That is why when a Massachusetts patient suffered side effects from a generic version of a prostate cancer drug, he sued Merck & Company instead and won the case.

Arkansas passes bill to regulate pharmacy benefit managers (PBM), making it the first state in the country to do so– Last week, the state passed a bill that allows for regulation of PBMs after independent pharmacies complained that they were going out of business due to low reimbursement rates from PBMs.

Electronic error kept an estimated 900 veterans from receiving proper care in Missouri, Kansas, and Illinois– The Veteran's Choice Program allows veterans to get treatment at a non-Veterans Affairs (VA) facility if the veterans wait more than 30 days for care at a VA facility or if a veteran has to travel more than 40 miles to seek care at a VA facility. The system computer incorrectly showed that over 900 veterans only waited for 10 days when, in fact, their wait times were over the 30-day limit. The inspector general noted multiple data inconsistencies and additional errors in the VA data.

Federal judge dismissed case to remove requirement that Tennessee provide refugees with Medicaid benefits– The state filed a lawsuit against the federal government saying that the government violated the Tenth Amendment by overstepping its Constitutional powers and requiring the state to provide Medicaid to refugees. The judge dismissed the case stating that states are aware of the conditions under which they are given Medicaid funds. Recently, Tennessee's House of Representatives passed a bill that would seek a Medicaid Waiver in order to develop work requirements for its state Medicaid program (TennCare).

Highlighted Issues: Homelessness in California

In 2017, with over 55,000 individuals, Los Angeles (LA) County had the second highest population of homeless individuals behind New York City (NYC).

The percentage of homeless individuals and unsheltered individuals has been increasing for the past 7 years in California and has contributed to significant health problems such as the hepatitis A outbreak.

California's lawmakers have proposed two different bills dedicated to tackling the problem. The funding would come from the budget's \$6.1 billion surplus. The mayor of LA has set goals to reduce the number of unsheltered homeless by 50 percent in the next 5 years through public and private funds.

1 out of 4 homeless individuals in the United States lives in California.



3 out of 4 homeless individuals in Los Angeles are unsheltered. In NYC, 95% of the homeless individuals have shelter.



Newsbytes Relevant to Our Strategic Priorities



To bring focus to our work, the Institute for Health Policy and Leadership has identified three strategic priorities: oral health, mental health and hunger as a health issue. This segment highlights news articles relevant to these priorities.

Oral Health

The Elks Mobile Dental Program in Missouri expands to other counties– The mobile bus has served more than 100,000 children and adults. At no cost to the residents, the dentist and dental assistants provide x-rays and preventive services such as fillings in underserved areas.

Hunger as a Health Issue

Study finds that food insecurity is growing globally– The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) released their Global Food Policy 2018 Report that shows a need for food policy reform as the number of undernourished individuals has been increasing worldwide since 2015.

Mental/ Behavioral Health

In New Hampshire, the president discussed a multifaceted approach to tackling the opioid epidemic– The strategy calls for addressing excessive opioid prescriptions, providing treatment, imposing a death penalty on certain opioid drug traffickers, and creating an advertisement campaign targeted at younger populations. While the budget for the plan is \$13 million, there has been no discussion of where the funding would come from.