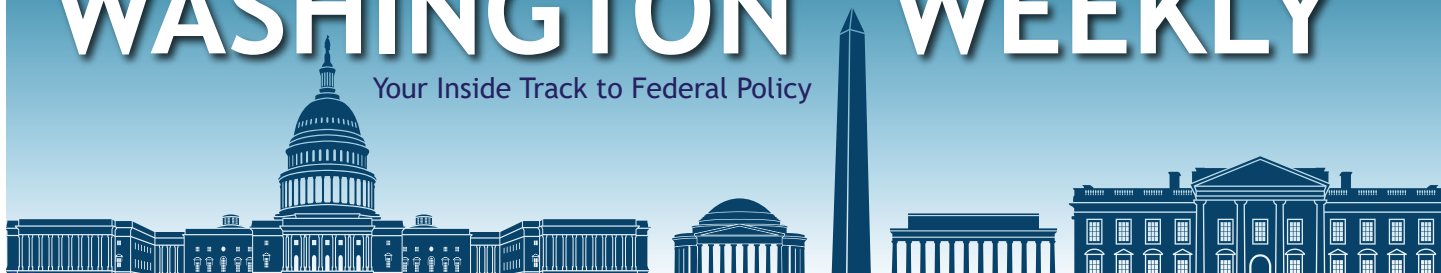


AACN's

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Your Inside Track to Federal Policy



May 16, 2018



Secretary Azar Discusses Drug Pricing Blueprint at HHS

On May 14, at a Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) national press briefing, Secretary Alex Azar delivered remarks on President Trump's [blueprint](#) to reduce costs for prescription drugs. Secretary Azar discussed four strategies laid out by the Administration: improved competition, lowering out-of-pocket costs, enhanced negotiation, and incentives for lower list prices. In Secretary Azar's [speech](#), he spoke about transparency in American drug markets so that patients know the costs before receiving the bill, and collaboration with Congress to amend legislation to curb runaway price increases. Secretary Azar and the Administration have [stated](#) that part of their mission is to create "a system for prescription drug pricing that puts American patients first—one that takes care of American patients, not takes advantage of them."



CMS Rural Health Strategy Focuses on All Providers

According to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), 60 million people live in rural areas across the nation and are more likely to be poor, older, uninsured or underinsured, and medically underserved compared to people in urban areas. To understand the state of health care in rural America, and to inform the agency's work on achieving accessible, affordable, and accountable health care, the CMS [Rural Health \(RH\) Council](#) created the [Rural Health Strategy](#). Following the identification of specific health issues in these communities and the impact of CMS policies on providers, the Council developed five strategic objectives to achieve its vision for rural health, including improving access to care through provider engagement and support. Specifically, it mentioned increasing the number of health professionals in rural communities and utilizing eligible providers, such as advanced practice registered nurses. [Read the Rural Health Strategy here.](#)



Interest Rates on Federal Student Loans to Rise this Year

Interest rates on new [federal student loans will rise](#) in the upcoming 2018-2019 academic year by more than half a percentage point. The rate, tied to the Treasury Department's sale of 10-year notes, will increase to 5.045% (up from the previous 4.45%) for undergraduate loans, 6.595% (up from 6%) for graduate loans, and 7.595% (up from 7%) for federal PLUS loans. The new interest rates will be in effect on July 1, 2018 and will remain fixed for the duration of the loan. These changes will not impact [existing loans](#).



Don't Miss the Policy Education Webinar on May 23

AACN will host a webinar to discuss the association's Faculty Policy Think Tank final report and recommendations. Join us and learn how the profession is moving to educate nurses to be an influential voice in the policy process. Catch the viewing live, or access the archived webinar after May 23, by [registering here](#).