

Cassidy Pushing For Bipartisan Health Bill

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(Inside Health Policy)

As the reconciliation process has wound down, Senate health committee Chair Bill Cassidy (R-LA) tells *Inside Health Policy* he is pushing for a bipartisan health bill that may include many of the topics from the failed December lame duck package.

“I’ve been advocating that we have a bipartisan health bill that would go through normal, regular order,” he told *IHP Thursday* (July 17). “I think there’s interest, on a bipartisan basis, to do that.”

He said he isn’t sure of the bill’s specifics, but said the elements of the stalled health bill from December are bipartisan and would be “logical” to include.

The attempted December 2024 lame duck package included a one-year extension of most health care extenders, a two-year extension of Medicare telehealth flexibilities, extension of community health center funding, a five-year reauthorization of the SUPPORT Act, a two-year reauthorization of the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness and Response Act, a physician payment bump and Advanced Alternative Payment Model bonus extension, and more. Most funding offsets would have come from a five-month extension of the Medicare sequester and pharmacy benefit manager reforms.

Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), a member of the Senate health committee, told *Inside Health Policy Thursday* she has been in discussions with Cassidy about taking up bills from last session and newly introduced ones this session.

Sen. Tim Kaine (D-VA), also a member of the committee, told *Inside Health Policy* he hopes there is time to do so with reconciliation now over.

“Start with the package that had been reported out before. That was a combination of various bills but I think that all of those issue areas are of concern and interest,” Baldwin said.

But up to now partisan tensions have overshadowed work on a bipartisan package. Soon after President Donald Trump signed the GOP reconciliation bill that cut nearly \$1 trillion from Medicaid, Republicans started hinting at another partisan reconciliation package. And the focus this week has been on the GOP rescissions bill, which was sent back to the House after the Senate narrowly approved it Thursday (July 17) with Democrats opposed. The Senate did not include cuts to a global AIDS program in its version of the rescissions bill after a handful of GOP senators objected and Senate Democrats threatened to stop all collaboration on appropriations negotiations for fiscal 2026 if Republicans approved President Donald Trump’s request that included cuts to HIV prevention and other global health initiatives. -- *Luke Zarzecki* (lzarzecki@iwpnews.com)