

# Means' Ties To Wellness Firms, RFK Jr. Policies Back In Focus With Confirmation Hearing Reset

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(Inside Health Policy)

The Senate health committee will hold a hearing on President Donald Trump's nomination of Casey Means to serve as surgeon general next week, where she will likely face tough questions about her financial ties to the wellness industry and her support for HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s "Make America Healthy Again" movement, particularly her views on vaccines.

The hearing will be held Feb. 25. Means, if confirmed, would also serve as the medical director of the Public Health Service Corps. Means was originally scheduled to testify before the Senate health committee in October but the hearing was postponed when she went into labor.

Means is the sister of a close Kennedy ally at HHS, and a prominent MAHA supporter aligned with Kennedy's views that the pharmaceutical and food industries are fueling a chronic disease crisis in the United States. Trump attributed his choice of Means as surgeon general to Kennedy's recommendation.

With a history of focusing on diet and chronic disease, Means could help the Trump administration pivot its health policy focus away from vaccines and to food issues and other less controversial issues ahead of the 2026 midterm election.

But with controversy over FDA's handling of Moderna's mRNA flu vaccine fresh in their minds and measles outbreaks continuing around the country, senators will likely ask Means pointed questions about her views on vaccination. FDA, bowing to public pressure, will now review Moderna's application after initially handing the company a refuse-to-file letter, Moderna announced Wednesday (Feb. 18).

In public remarks and writings, Means has blamed rising rates of chronic disease -- including obesity, diabetes, and infertility -- on environmental chemicals, pharmaceuticals and sedentary lifestyles. Her positions align closely with Kennedy's MAHA campaign, which casts the pharmaceutical industry as a driving force behind America's health crisis.

Trained as an otolaryngologist, Means left her surgical residency before completion to pursue functional medicine, an alternative approach that emphasizes lifestyle and root-cause interventions over traditional treatment. She is the author of the 2023 book *Good Energy*, which links chronic illness to diet, metabolism and modern living.

Means is also co-founder of Levels, a startup offering wearable glucose monitors marketed to consumers seeking greater control over their health.

Means' brother is a senior advisor at HHS. Ethics experts have raised concerns about both siblings' financial ties to the wellness industry, which could lead them to financially benefit from Kennedy's MAHA policies. Means has earned hundreds of thousands of dollars from affiliate marketing and sponsorships with supplement companies, some of which face minimal regulation in the United States.

While Means said in her September ethics disclosure that she will address potential conflicts by divesting certain holdings and ending some promotional work, her connection to her spouse's influencer marketing company may continue to raise ethical questions, ethics experts told *Inside Health Policy*.

Means replaced former *Fox News* contributor Janette Nesheiwat as nominee for surgeon general. Trump made the switch just one day before the Senate health committee was set to hold a confirmation hearing on a Nesheiwat's appointment, amid allegations that she falsified information about her medical education.

The surgeon general spot is one of several high-level health positions in the Trump administration that are currently vacant. Jim O'Neill's departure from HHS leaves the department without a deputy secretary and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention without a permanent or acting director. Trump has not announced a replacement for ousted CDC director Susan Monarez, who served in the role for just a few weeks, and CDC's leadership page lists the director role as vacant.