



H&K HEALTH DOSE: PRE-ELECTION OUTLOOK

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Here is a special edition of Health Dose focusing on the congressional and administrative landscape as the November 2024 election approaches.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. **Election Watch**
2. **House Outlook**
 - House Leadership
 - House Energy and Commerce Committee
 - House Ways and Means Committee
 - Tri-Caucus Transitions
 - Party Politics
3. **Senate Outlook**
 - Senate Leadership
 - Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee
 - Senate Finance Committee
4. **Potential Healthcare Leaders in a Trump/Vance Administration**
5. **Potential Healthcare Leaders in a Harris/Walz Administration**
6. **Lame-Duck Session: What to Expect**

ELECTION WATCH

Election years inherently bring uncertainty and change, particularly in health policy, where priorities in both Congress and the executive branch can shift dramatically. The presidential race between Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump is exceptionally close.

However, healthcare policy isn't determined solely by the occupant of the White House: Control of Congress plays an equally pivotal role. Currently, the House of Representatives is highly competitive, with Republicans needing at least 218 seats to maintain their majority and Democrats striving to net just four seats to reclaim control. Almost 30 races remain in the "toss-up" category, reflecting how uncertain the outcome is.

In the Senate, the margin is even slimmer. Democrats hold 51 seats, including three independents, while Republicans control 49. There are 34 Senate seats up for grabs, including a special election in Nebraska. Of these, 23 are currently held by Democrats or Independents. For Republicans to regain control, they need a net gain of two seats, or they could win the 2024 presidential election and gain just one additional seat. Whichever party wins control of the Senate will have a profound influence on the next president's legislative agenda, key appointments and judicial nominations. Of the 51 seats currently held by Democrats, only 14 are deemed solid. With several critical races on the horizon, both parties face a steep fight for dominance in Congress.



HOUSE OUTLOOK

House Leadership

The House of Representatives is up for grabs in the November election. Republicans currently hold power in the House with a slim majority of 220-211 and four vacant seats. All 435 seats are up for reelection in each Congress, and *Cook Political Report* places 26 of those races in the "toss-up" category. Neither party is definitively tracking toward the 218 seats needed to control the chamber. The conventional wisdom is that with House races so close and margins for control so tight, the House likely will follow whatever happens at the top of the ticket between Harris and Trump. Nevertheless, whichever party takes control of the House will undoubtedly do so by a slim majority.

House Republican politics will largely be dominated over the next several months by election results, Trump and the looming December funding fight. Speaker of the House Mike Johnson (R-La.) is seeking to retain control of the gavel during the 119th Congress; however, it could become an intraparty fight even if Republicans do remain in power. Johnson will need to grow the majority and handily retain control to remain Speaker or he will have to appease his critics to stay in his post. If margins are tight like they were this Congress, Speaker Johnson can only afford to lose a handful of votes in the Jan. 3, 2025, speakership vote. During his tenure as Speaker, after the ouster of Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) from the top leadership position, 11 conservatives have already attempted to unseat the Louisianan and other far-right conservatives have criticized the way he has handled appropriations battles and Ukraine aid. A broader group of conservative members have indicated they may push for Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Ohio) to take the helm, especially if Republicans lose the House. Jordan has positioned himself well for a shift to leadership, traveling, campaigning and raising money for a wide variety of House Republicans, even some that previously opposed his leadership attempts.

Although the House formally votes as a body on the Speaker at the start of the new Congress on Jan. 3, each respective conference will work through its leadership nominations immediately following the election. Should an intraparty battle emerge for the speakership, administrative items such as Committee leadership and Speaker-led new member appointments will take a back seat. The party in power will choose a Speaker-Elect before those items are addressed. Notably, the Speaker-Elect position only requires a simple majority of the conference via a secret ballot. The Jan. 3 vote is tighter – the Speaker-Elect needs at least 218 votes and near-unanimous party backing, leaving little room for defections in a tight majority.

Should Johnson decide not to run for Speaker, or if Republicans perform poorly in the general election, Jordan and Majority Leader Steve Scalise (R-La.) would likely emerge as frontrunners to take on his role as party head. Majority Whip Tom Emmer (R-Minn.) and Chief Deputy Whip Guy Reschenthaler (R-Pa.) might also stay in their respective roles. However, Reschenthaler may be eyeing up a leadership role on the Rules Committee with Rep. Tom Cole (R-Okla.) heading up the Appropriations Committee, which would leave an opening within the leadership lineup.

House Democratic leadership is expected to be much more static; Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-N.Y.) and Minority Whip Katherine Clark (D-Mass.) both plan to remain in their leadership positions. Earlier in the year, Assistant Leader James Clyburn (D-S.C.) stepped down from his leadership role and was replaced by Democratic Policy and Communications Committee Chair Joe Neguse (D-Colo.).



Energy and Commerce Committee

The 119th Congress will yield a shakeup in the House Energy and Commerce Committee. Current Energy and Commerce Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-Wash.) is retiring, and Reps. Brett Guthrie (R-Ky.) and Bob Latta (R-Ohio) are both running to become the lead Republican for the Committee. Guthrie currently serves as the Chair of the Health Subcommittee, so if he is promoted to Chair/Ranking Member, there will be a new Subcommittee Chair. Reps. Buddy Carter (R-Ga.), Morgan Griffith (R-Va.) and Gus Bilirakis (R-Fla.) are possible contenders for that role should it open up. Rep. Richard Hudson (R-N.C.), who currently chairs the National Republican Congressional Committee, could also throw his hat in the ring for Chair/Ranking Member depending on if Republicans keep their majority.

On the Democratic side, Ranking Member Frank Pallone (D-N.J.) will likely continue as the Committee's top Democrat. Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-Conn.), the Health Subcommittee Ranking Member, is retiring this Congress and Rep. Diana DeGette (D-Colo.) is the most likely contender to take on her role.

Steering Committees for each party will determine topline leaders, and Subcommittee Chair and Ranking Member appointments will almost immediately trickle down. Typically, the Steering Committee will review all Committee leadership assignments before turning to general membership decisions.

The current ratio on the Committee is 29 Republicans to 23 Democrats. Regardless of whether the House flips or remains under Republican control, the ratios are likely to be similar due to tight margins. However, the ratios are negotiated by leadership and are subject to fluctuation. Should the House flip, there likely will not be many new Republicans welcomed onto the Committee, but few members will likely be kicked off given the number of retirements this Congress.

| Republican Retirements | Democratic Retirements |
|--|--|
| Committee Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-Wash.) | Health Subcommittee Ranking Member Anna Eshoo (D-Calif.) |
| Michael Burgess (R-Texas) | John Sarbanes (D-Md.) |
| Larry Bucshon (R-Ind.) | Paul Tonko (D-N.Y.) |
| Jeff Duncan (R-S.C.) | Tony Cardenas (D-Calif.) |
| John Curtis (R-Utah) | Ann Kuster (D-N.H.) |
| Debbie Lesko (R-Ariz.) | Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-Del.) |
| Greg Pence (R-Ind.) | |
| Vice Chair Kelly Armstrong (R-N.D.) | |
| Republican Committee Contenders | Democratic Committee Contenders |
| Eric Burlison (R-Mo.) | Sharice Davids (D-Kan.) |
| Laurel Lee (R-Fla.) | Troy Carter (D-La.) |



| | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Nick Langworthy (R-N.Y.) | Chris Deluzio (D-Pa.) |
| Wesley Hunt (R-Texas) | Kevin Mullin (D-Calif.) |
| Marc Molinaro (R-N.Y.) | Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) |
| Russell Fry (R-S.C.) | |
| Anthony D'Esposito (R-N.Y.) | |
| Tim Walberg (R-Mich.) | |

Ways and Means Committee

Unlike Energy and Commerce, Ways and Means will look substantially similar to how it looks now. 118th Congress Ways and Means Chair Jason Smith (R-Mo.) and Ranking Member Richie Neal (D-Mass.) will likely remain as the committee's leadership. There likely will not be changes to Ways and Means Health Subcommittee leadership – Reps. Vern Buchanan (R-Fla.) and Lloyd Doggett (D-Texas).

The current ratio on Committee is 25 Republicans to 18 Democrats. The ratio could change if Democrats take the House, but we generally expect it to be similar in the 119th Congress.

| Republican Retirements | Democratic Retirements |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Rep. Brad Wenstrup (R-Ohio) | Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) |
| Rep. Drew Ferguson (R-Ga.) | Rep. Dan Kildee (D-Mich.) |
| Republican Toss-Up Races | Democratic Toss-Up Races |
| Rep. David Schweikert (R-Ariz.) | Michigan-08 Open Seat (Rep. Dan Kildee's District) |
| Rep. Michelle Steel (R-Calif.) | |
| Republican Committee Contenders | Democratic Committee Contenders |
| Rep. Aaron Bean (R-Fla.) | Rep. Tim Kennedy (D-N.Y.) |
| Rep. Rudy Yakym (R-Ind.) | Rep. Brendan Boyle (D-Pa.) |
| Rep. Max Miller (R-Ohio) | Rep. Thomas Suozzi (D-N.Y.) |
| Rep. Mike Collins (R-Ga.) | Rep. Steven Horsford (D-Nev.) |
| Rep. Rich McCormick (R-Ga.) | Rep. Stacey Plaskett (D-V.I.) |



Tri-Caucus Transitions

- **Congressional Black Caucus (CBC):** There are several contenders for CBC chair, including Reps. Troy Carter (D-La.), Steven Horsford (D-Nev.), and Yvette Clarke (D-N.Y.). Horsford is the current CBC chair.
- **Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC):** CHC Deputy Chair Adriano Espaillat (D-N.Y.) is favored to succeed current Chair Nanette Barragán (D-Calif.).
- **Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC):** Current Vice Chair Grace Meng (D-N.Y.) is favored to succeed current Chair Judy Chu (D-Calif.).

Party Politics

- **New Democrat Coalition:** Reps. Sharice Davids (D-Kan.) and Brad Schneider (D-Calif.) are vying to take over the New Democrats, the socially liberal, fiscally moderate caucus ideologically positioned between the Congressional Progressive Caucus and the Blue Dog Coalition.
- **Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC):** Rep. Greg Casar (D-Texas), who currently serves as whip on the CPC, is expected to take over from the current chair, Rep. Pramila Jayapal (D-Wash.).
- **Blue Dog Coalition:** The Blue Dog Coalition is co-chaired by Reps. Jared Golden (D-Maine), Mary Peltola (D-Alaska), and Marie Gluesenkamp Perez (D-Wash.). Rep. Golden is in a tight race to retain his seat in Congress. He has previously described ambitious plans to revamp the Blue Dog coalition if Democrats take the House, resituating the caucus as a venerable centrist voting bloc that holds the power to dictate the outcome of legislation on top priorities.
- **Freedom Caucus:** Rep. Andy Harris (R-Md.) was elected as the incoming Freedom Caucus chair for the upcoming Congress. Interestingly, Harris also serves as an Appropriations subcommittee chairman, or "cardinal," and he has emphasized that he will use his understanding of the appropriations process to push for the most conservative spending outcomes possible. Harris succeeds Rep. Bob Good (R-Va.), who lost his primary to John McGuire and left Congress before the end of his term.
- **Republican Study Committee (RSC):** Rep. Kevin Hern (R-Okla.) is running for reelection as RSC chair.

SENATE OUTLOOK

The Democratic Party currently holds a slim majority in the Senate, with the balance of power currently standing at 51-49 (including the three Independents who caucus with the Democrats).

It is unlikely either party will garner a 60-seat, filibuster-proof majority in the Senate. Still, the map this fall heavily favors Senate Republicans: of the 34 seats up for reelection, 23 seats are Democratic-held and only 11 seats are Republican-held. This means that Republicans will only need to flip two Senate seats to gain control of the chamber. Since the seat currently held by retiring Sen. Joe Manchin (I-W.Va.) will almost certainly go to the Republican candidate running to replace him (West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice), the best-case scenario for Democrats will likely be a 50-50 split. Should Kamala Harris win the presidential election, Democrats would have a razor-thin majority. With a Donald Trump victory, Republicans would flip the chamber.



The table below provides an overview of Senate races to watch. Each of these seats are currently held by Democrats. Absent a darkhorse upset, if any of these seats flip, the chamber will flip.

| Democratic Candidate | Republican Candidate | Cook Political Report (Oct. 8) | Sabato's Crystal Ball (Sept. 25) |
|--|----------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <i>Sen. Jon Tester (D-Mont.)</i> | Tim Sheehy | Lean Republican | Lean Republican |
| <i>Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio)</i> | Bernie Moreno | Toss-Up | Toss-Up |
| <i>Sen. Bob Casey (D-Pa.)</i> | David McCormick | Lean Democratic | Lean Democratic |
| <i>Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.)</i> | Eric Hovde | Toss-Up | Lean Democratic |
| <i>Sen. Jacky Rosen (D-Nev.)</i> | Sam Brown | Lean Democratic | Lean Democratic |
| Rep. Elissa Slotkin (D-Mich.) *Seat currently held by retiring Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.) | Mike Rodgers | Toss-Up | Lean Democratic |
| Rep. Ruben Gallego (D-Ariz.) *Seat currently held by retiring Sen. Kyrsten Sinema (I-Ariz) | Kari Lake | Lean Democratic | Lean Democratic |

Italics: candidate is the incumbent.

*Incumbent is retiring or seeking other office

The most plausible – yet far from likely – potential pickup for Democrats in the Senate is the seat currently held by Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas). Other long-shot potential pickups include the seats currently held by Sen. Deb Fisher (R-Neb.) and Sen. Rick Scott (R-Fla.).

Senate Leadership

Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) is stepping down as Senate Republican leader. Senate Republican Conference Chair John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) has not yet publicly announced a date for the leadership election, but it is tentatively scheduled for Nov. 13. Sens. John Thune (R-S.D.) and John Cornyn (R-Texas) are currently the frontrunners in the Senate Republican leadership race. Scott is also in the running, and should Republicans win the White House, it is possible that his candidacy will see a surge in support. A Republican victory in the presidential race might also spur Sen. Steve Daines (D-Mont.) to launch a late campaign for the position. Additionally, if former President Trump wins and chooses to speak out, he could potentially influence the overall leadership process.



The No. 3 GOP spot, Senate Republican Conference chair, has two people running: Sens. Joni Ernst (R-Iowa) and Tom Cotton (R-Ark.).

As in the House, there is much less uncertainty expected on the Democratic side. Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) is expected to remain in his leadership role.

Senate HELP Committee

Senate Committee sizes, assignments and ratios will partially depend on specific election outcomes, Senate control and the balance of power.

Current HELP Chair Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) has indicated he is "interested" in pursuing a seat on the Senate Finance Committee. He would not necessarily need to give up his leadership role on HELP to do so, but should he step down, Sen. Bob Casey (D-Pa.), Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.) or Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) would likely take his place.

Current Ranking Member Bill Cassidy (R-La.) is expected to retain his leadership position on the HELP committee. Sen. Rand Paul (D-Ky.) will likely again decline to take the top Republican role on HELP in favor of heading up the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee (HSGAC) – especially if Kamala Harris wins the election, considering the committee's subpoena authorities. Another potential change-up could occur if Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) decides to bump Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) from her position on the Senate Appropriations Committee. Sen. Collins might elect to take the helm on HELP in that scenario.

Several slots are likely to open up "down dais" on the Republican side of Senate Finance. Sens. Mike Braun (R-Ind.) and Mitt Romney (R-Utah) are not returning (Sen. Braun is running for governor, and Sen. Romney is retiring), and the two freshman Republican senators currently serving on HELP – Sens. Markwayne Mullin (R-Okla.) and Sen. Ted Budd (R-N.C.) – may opt to give up their HELP seats.

| Republican Retirements | Democratic Retirements |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Sen. Mike Braun (R-Ind.), running for governor | |
| Sen. Mitt Romney (R-Utah) | |
| Republican Toss-Up Races | Democratic Toss-Up Races |
| | Sen. Bob Casey (D-Pa.) |
| | Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.) |
| Republican Committee Contenders | Democratic Committee Contenders |
| Rep. John Curtis (R-Utah) | Rep. Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-Del.) |

Senate Finance Committee

Current Ranking Member Sen. Mike Crapo (R-Idaho) will likely retain his position as lead Republican on the Senate Finance Committee. None of the down-dais Republicans currently serving on the committee face competitive reelection races or is retiring, so significant shuffling is not expected.



Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) will almost certainly retain his committee leadership position. Additionally, a notable number of down-dais seats on the Democratic side will become vacant. Sens. Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.), Tom Carper (D-Del.), Ben Cardin (D-Md.) and George Helmy (D-N.J.) are all leaving office, Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) is in a very tight reelection race, and Sen. Bob Casey (D-Pa.) is also vulnerable. Further, there is a possibility that one or two additional Democrats will give up their seat on Finance to snag a vacant slot on the Senate Appropriations Committee.

| Republican Retirements | Democratic Retirements |
|---------------------------------|--|
| | Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.) |
| | Sen. Thomas Carper (D-Del.) |
| | Sen. Benjamin Cardin (D-Md.) |
| | Sen. George Helmy (N.J.), serving remainder of Bob Menendez's term |
| Republican Toss-Up Races | Democratic Toss-Up Races |
| | Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) |
| | Sen. Bob Casey (D-Pa.) |
| Republican Committee Contenders | Democratic Committee Contenders |
| | Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) |
| | Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) |
| | Sen. Tina Smith (D-Minn.) |
| | Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.) |
| | Sen. Ed Markey (D-Mass.) |

Potential Healthcare Leaders in a Trump/Vance Administration

As the transition occurs between old and new administrations, it is important to identify key points of contact on priority healthcare issues. Though most of these key players remain to be seen, there are rapidly developing and ever-shifting predictions for administration leadership depending on who controls the White House.

Should the Trump/Vance Administration take the White House, Biden Administration political appointees' positions would expire. In addition to political appointees, there are also career civil servants. Depending on who wins, there is a possibility that individuals may choose to leave their positions if they don't desire to work under the new administration.



Generally speaking, former President Trump is likely to select key figures from the previous Trump Administration who remained through the end of the previous Trump Administration, key members of his current and former campaigns, or leaders of conservative policy organizations. Notably, the Trump/Vance team has reportedly eschewed the traditional General Services Administration (GSA)-provided effort. Here are some of the possible leaders who could shape healthcare under a second Trump administration:

1. **Brian Blase, Paragon Health Institute**

Currently the president of Paragon Health Institute, Blase previously served as special assistant to President Trump for economic policy, where he focused on healthcare deregulation and insurance reforms. With his extensive background in policy analysis from both the Senate Republican Policy Committee and the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, Blase is well positioned for a senior healthcare policy role in a second Trump administration.

2. **Michael Caputo, Former HHS Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs**

Caputo, a close ally of Trump with deep political connections, notably to Roger Stone, served as assistant secretary for public affairs at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) during the first Trump Administration. His media acumen and loyalist reputation suggest he could return to a key public-facing healthcare role, potentially advising on communications strategy in a second term.

3. **Joe Grogan, Former Director of the Domestic Policy Council (DPC)**

Grogan led the DPC under Trump and was a key player in drug pricing reform and the administration's COVID-19 response measures. With his experience at both the DPC and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Grogan is a likely candidate to return to a senior healthcare policy position, particularly in regulatory reforms or health crisis management.

4. **Bobby Jindal, Former Governor of Louisiana**

Jindal, who served as governor of Louisiana from 2008 to 2016, was previously considered for HHS secretary during Trump's first term. Now chairing the America First Policy Institute's (AFPI) Center for a Healthy America, Jindal's deep experience in healthcare reform and executive leadership could place him back in the running for a top health policy role, potentially even Secretary of Health and Human Services.

5. **Valerie Huber, Former Special Representative for Global Women's Health**

Huber served as special representative for global women's health at HHS, where she was involved in Trump-era reproductive health policies. Her recent work with Project 2025, which aims to prepare conservative policy initiatives for a second Trump term, suggests she could be brought back into the fold for another leadership role, particularly in women's health policy.

6. **Charlie Katebi, Deputy Director of AFPI's Center for a Healthy America**

Katebi led the HHS Office of Civil Rights during Trump's first term and has since become deputy director at the AFPI's Center for a Healthy America. His experience in conservative healthcare advocacy, including civil rights in healthcare and opposition to government overreach, positions him as a potential candidate for a key healthcare or civil rights role in a second Trump Administration.

7. **Ed Martin, Political Strategist and Author**

Martin has been instrumental in shaping Trump's 2024 campaign platform on reproductive health, working closely with other conservative leaders such as Russ Vought and Paul Evans. A longtime Republican strategist and co-author of *The Conservative Case for Trump*, Martin could take on a senior advisory role within HHS or be involved in shaping health policy strategy from a political standpoint.



8. **Theo Merkel, Former Special Assistant to the President for Economic Policy**

Merkel was a driving force behind the June 2019 executive order on healthcare price transparency, and his expertise in economic and healthcare policy makes him a strong contender for another advisory role in a Trump Administration. Previously a legislative director for former Sen. Pat Toomey, Merkel's focus on transparency and market-driven healthcare solutions would align with Trump's deregulatory agenda.

9. **Roger Severino, Vice President for Domestic Policy at the Heritage Foundation**

Severino led the HHS Office of Civil Rights during Trump's first term and has since been a leading voice at the Heritage Foundation, where he authored the healthcare section of Project 2025. His strong advocacy for religious freedom and opposition to the expansion of government-run healthcare would likely make him a key figure in shaping conservative healthcare policy, possibly with a return to HHS.

Potential Healthcare Leaders in a Harris/Walz Administration

In the event of a Harris/Walz Administration win, Vice President Harris will need to decide how much of the existing personnel to retain. With over 4,000 political appointee positions to fill, the administration's approach remains unclear. However, it's likely they will replace some positions to differentiate their leadership from Biden's and bring in their own trusted team. Many of these potential appointees have longstanding connections with Harris and have been influential in healthcare policy, reproductive rights and maternal health. Below are individuals who could play key roles in shaping health policy under a Harris/Walz Administration.

1. **Sen. Laphonza Butler (D-Calif.), U.S. Senate**

Butler, currently serving the remainder of the late Sen. Dianne Feinstein's term, is a former president of Emily's List, a group dedicated to electing pro-choice Democratic women. She has a longstanding relationship with Harris, dating back to her time as a labor leader in California. While she is not running for a full Senate term, Butler's close alliance with Harris and her political acumen make her a potential candidate for a high-level administration role.

2. **Mark Cuban, Founder of Mark Cuban Cost Plus Drugs**

The billionaire has shown a strong interest in healthcare reform, particularly in lowering the cost of prescription drugs. He has publicly supported Vice President Harris' positions on pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) and has engaged with her team on healthcare issues. While Cuban has been coy about accepting a formal role in the administration, his influence on drug pricing policy could shape future health initiatives, especially if Harris leverages his ideas from outside government.

3. **Rohini Kosoglu, Stanford University**

A longtime health policy advisor to Harris, Kosoglu has worked closely with her on health programs, including the COVID-19 response and Cancer Moonshot initiative. With a background in healthcare legislation and Affordable Care Act negotiations, Kosoglu's expertise could position her for a prominent role in shaping healthcare policy for a Harris/Walz administration. She is currently involved in academia and venture capital, focusing on healthcare innovation.

4. **Jennifer Klein, White House Gender Policy Council**

As the co-chair and director of the White House Gender Policy Council, Klein has worked closely with Harris on maternal health and reproductive rights. With a background in national healthcare reform from her time in the Clinton administration, Klein's experience in advancing women's health initiatives aligns with Harris' focus. Her leadership in the council could evolve into a broader healthcare policy role under Harris.



5. **Vanita Gupta, New York University**

A prominent civil rights litigator and former associate attorney general, Gupta has earned praise from Harris for her leadership in defending reproductive rights. With her legal expertise and passion for social justice, Gupta may be well-suited to lead federal efforts to protect abortion access and advance civil rights within healthcare policy.

6. **Chiquita Brooks-LaSure, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services**

As CMS Administrator, Brooks-LaSure has been instrumental in expanding postpartum Medicaid coverage and advancing maternal health policy, areas that align closely with Harris' priorities. With her extensive experience in health policy and her collaboration with Harris on various initiatives, Brooks-LaSure could transition to a senior role in health policy, potentially as Secretary of Health and Human Services.

7. **Alexis McGill Johnson, Planned Parenthood and Mini Timmaraju, Reproductive Freedom for All**

Both McGill Johnson and Timmaraju have been key advisors to Harris on reproductive rights, joining her at several White House events and roundtables. Their leadership in promoting reproductive freedom positions them as likely candidates for advisory roles in a Harris/Walz Administration, particularly as the administration tackles ongoing challenges to reproductive health access.

8. **Rep. Lauren Underwood (D-III.) and Rep. Alma Adams (D-N.C.)**

Underwood and Adams co-founded the Black Maternal Health Caucus and worked with Harris on the Black Maternal Health Omnibus Act. Their expertise and dedication to addressing maternal health disparities make them potential allies in shaping and advancing healthcare legislation under a Harris administration. Their experience in Congress could also help secure support for key maternal health initiatives.

Lame-Duck Session: What to Expect

Congress is set to return on Nov. 12, 2024, for the start of the lame-duck session, facing a lengthy to-do list. The top priority will be addressing government funding, which is currently authorized through a continuing resolution (CR) expiring on Dec. 20. Appropriators are negotiating a FY 2025 spending package, but the outcome of the election could determine whether another CR extending into 2025 is needed or if the process can be completed before the 119th Congress is sworn in. Many, including House Appropriations Chair Tom Cole (R-Okla.), hope to finalize appropriations in December.

In addition to funding, other "must pass" legislation includes the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and the Farm Bill. Progress on both has been slow, raising concerns that Congress may need to pass extensions, similar to what was done in December 2023.

In the Senate, the primary focus will be on confirming judicial appointments before a potential change in administration, leaving little room for nonessential legislation.

A potential healthcare package remains uncertain, as its scope will depend on the balance of power between Congress and the administration. Key healthcare priorities that need to be addressed by year-end include funding for Medicare extenders such as the Medicare-dependent hospital program and low-volume hospital payment adjustments, as well as funding for Community Health Centers, the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) and Teaching Health Centers Graduate Medical Education programs. Additionally, Congress must address Medicaid Disproportionate Share Hospitals (DSH) cuts, prevent payment reductions for physician services under the Medicare conversion factor and extend pandemic-era telehealth waivers. How the government will pay for these priorities is also an evolving discussion.