

Opening Statement of Chairman Greg Walden
Full Committee Markup
September 13, 2018

This morning we're here to markup six bipartisan pieces of legislation that have been thoughtfully considered by two of our distinguished subcommittees.

We'll consider a bill to prohibit the so-called "gag clauses" that have limited a pharmacist's ability to inform a customer about the lower cost, out-of-pocket price of a prescription.

This issue was first brought to my attention by Michele, a pharmacist from Grants Pass, Oregon. She told me how she was precluded – under certain insurance contracts – from sharing such information with consumers. Banning these gag clauses has bipartisan support – in both chambers – and I hope we can move this legislation forward today.

We'll take a look at an important bill that will give the administration additional authority to better detect and stop fraud and abuse in the health care system.

We will also consider three bills in the Medicaid space that will help ensure that beneficiaries are receiving the support and care they deserve in the setting that works best for them.

Mr. Guthrie and Ms. Dingell's bill, H.R. 5306 for example, will extend funding for the Money Follows the Person Demonstration Program (MFP demonstration) in Medicaid – a popular initiative which has been very successful.

We will also consider a bill authored by Mr. Walberg and Mr. Welch, H.R. 3891, that will improve the authority of state Medicaid Fraud Control Units – broadening their authority to investigate abuse and neglect of Medicaid beneficiaries.

We will also consider H.R. 3325, the ACE Kids Act, authored by Energy and Commerce Committee Vice Chairman Joe Barton and Rep. Kathy Castor (D-FL), which will address currently challenges by giving states a new option through the existing Health Home model to coordinate care for children with medically complex conditions.

Last but not least, we will consider Mr. Barton and Mr. Rush’s bill, H.R. 6511, the Strategic Petroleum Reserve Reform Act. We’ve been hard at work identifying ways to modernize the Department of Energy, and the bill before us today to authorize a pilot leasing program at the SPR is another important step. The SPR is one of the nation’s most valuable energy security assets, but it is 50 years old, and the time has come to make significant upgrades to ensure it remains mission-ready in the years ahead.

As Hurricane Florence bears down on the East Coast, we should remember that we called on the SPR last year to address short-term emergency supply disruptions from Hurricane Harvey. I pray that we won’t need to use the SPR again, but it is reassuring to know that we have it in case of emergency.

H.R. 6511 will help attract commercial investments to offset the cost of improving the SPR’s caverns and above-ground facilities, with the ultimate goal of modernizing the SPR so it’s more resilient and better equipped to respond to an

energy supply disruption.

Today, we have a great opportunity to improve patient care, reduce health care fraud, and modernize the DOE's long-term energy security mission. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me in supporting these six bipartisan bills, and look forward to advancing them to the full House of Representatives for consideration.