

Civitas Public Policy Briefing

Troutman Strategies – Thursday, March 19, 2026



Housekeeping Reminders

- This is a Zoom webinar.
- All webinar participants are automatically muted, and your video is not displayed.
- Use the chat feature to introduce yourself (name, org, location), share resources, etc.
- If you would like to ask a question, please use the Q&A function on the taskbar.
- This webinar is being recorded, and the recording will be shared after today's event.
- For questions following the webinar, reach out to contact@civitasforhealth.org.



Agenda

- **Civitas & Troutman Strategies: Welcome & Updates**
 - Jolie Ritzo, CEO, Civitas Networks for Health
 - Karen Ostrowski, Director, Health Policy and Regulatory Affairs, Civitas Networks for Health
 - Lindsay Austin, Principal, Troutman Strategies
 - Christopher W. Baxter, Senior Manager, Federal Affairs, Troutman Strategies
- **Public Policy Briefing Overview and Presentation**

Upcoming Workgroup Meetings

- **March 27, 12–1 p.m. ET** – Marketing & Communications
- **April 09, 4–5 p.m. ET** – Public Health
- **April 10, 1–2 p.m.** – SDoH & Interoperability
- **April 24, 12-1 p.m.** – Equity and Quality

Want to sign up for a workgroup? Fill out the [interest form](#)

Upcoming Civitas and Partner Events

- **April 1-10** - [Virtual HIPAA Summit](#)
- **April 15**- Civitas Network News
- **April 22-23** - Catalyst for Health 2026
- **April 27-30** - InterSystems READY Conference 2026
- **April 29-30** - Wyoming 211 SDOH Summit
- **May 6-7** - NAHDO's 40th Anniversary Celebration & 2026 Annual Meeting

Want to see more upcoming events? [View our events calendar!](#)

Updates on the Civitas 2026 Annual Conference

Mark Your Calendars!

The Civitas Networks for Health 2026 Annual Conference, hosted in collaboration with our Mid-Atlantic Host Committee, will take place September 22–24, 2026, in Arlington, VA.

We're excited to welcome 800+ attendees this year and look forward to seeing you in Arlington, VA—just across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C.

Our conference logo and [Sponsorship Prospectus](#) are now available! If your organization is interested in sponsoring, please review the prospectus and reach out to Kate Kroell (kkroell@civitasforhealth.org) to explore opportunities.



Your Civitas Government Relations Team



Lindsay Austin – Principal, Troutman Strategies



Chris Baxter – Senior Manager, Troutman Strategies



Jolie Ritzo – CEO, Civitas Networks for Health[®]



Karen Ostrowski, Director, Health Policy and Regulatory Affairs, Civitas Networks for Health[®]



Agenda

1. Dates to Watch
2. State of Congress
3. 2026 Midterm Preview
4. Healthcare Trends in 2026
5. Congressional Activity
6. Administration Activity

Dates to Watch

March 3 –
Primaries
Began
(AR, NC,
TX)

May 20 –
Civitas
DC Fly-In

Sept. 15 –
Last of the
Primaries
(DE)

Sept. 30 –
End of
Fiscal
Year 2026

Oct. 30 –
Year 1
RHTP
Budget
Period
Ends

Nov. 3 –
Midterm
Elections

State of Congress

House

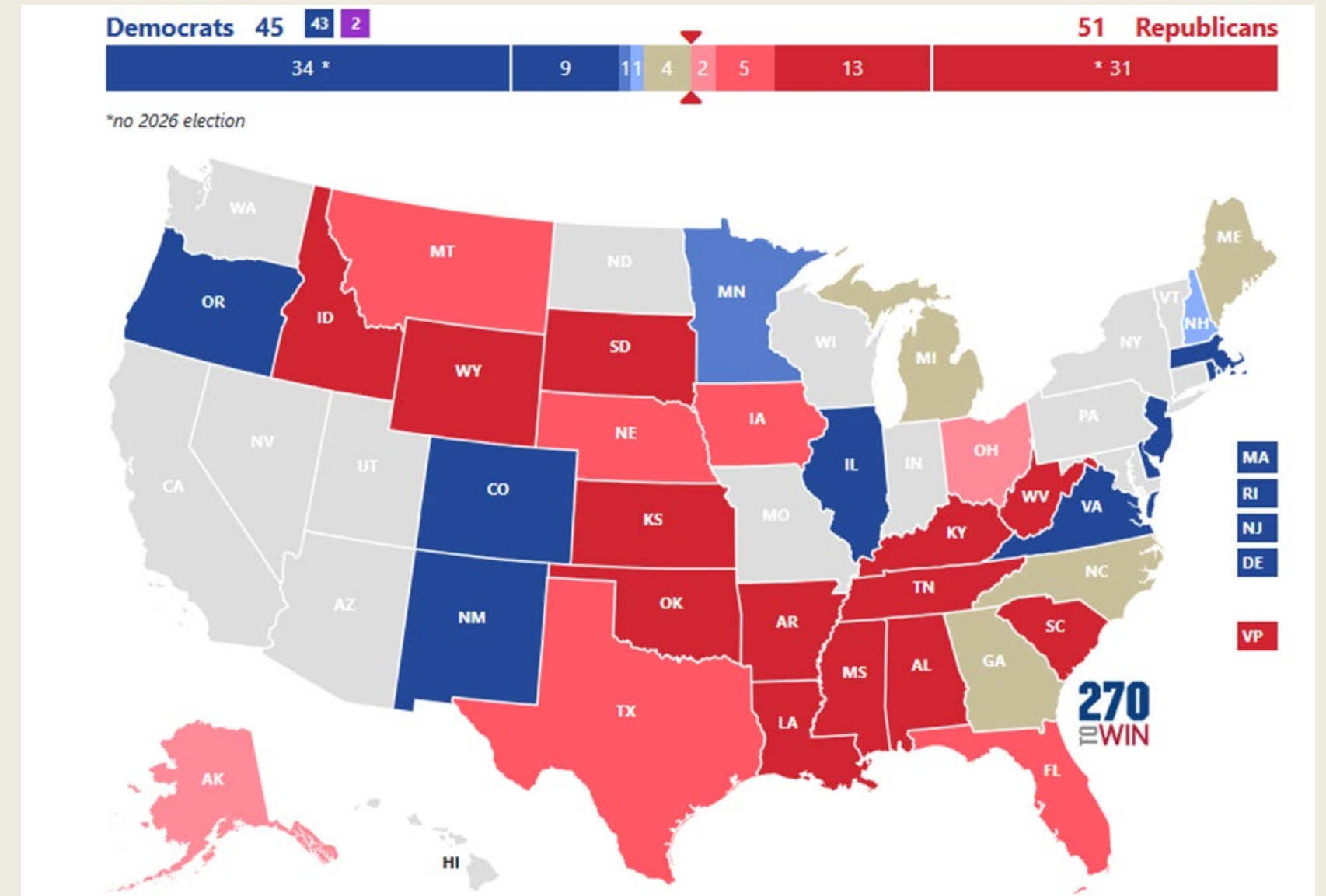
- **119th Congress:** 218 Rs to 214 Ds + 3 vacancies
- **Special elections:**
 - April 7 runoff to replace MTG (R-GA)
 - April 16 to replace Mikie Sherrill (D-NJ)
 - August 4 to replace Doug LaMalfa (R-CA)
- A slim majority remains challenging for House leadership – Speaker Johnson can currently only afford to lose one vote to pass legislation on a party-line basis
- Republicans were down two seats to start the year due to MTG's (R-GA) resignation and the passing of Doug LaMalfa (R-CA)
- Over 50 sitting House members are either resigning at the end of the term or seeking other office – over half are Rs

Senate

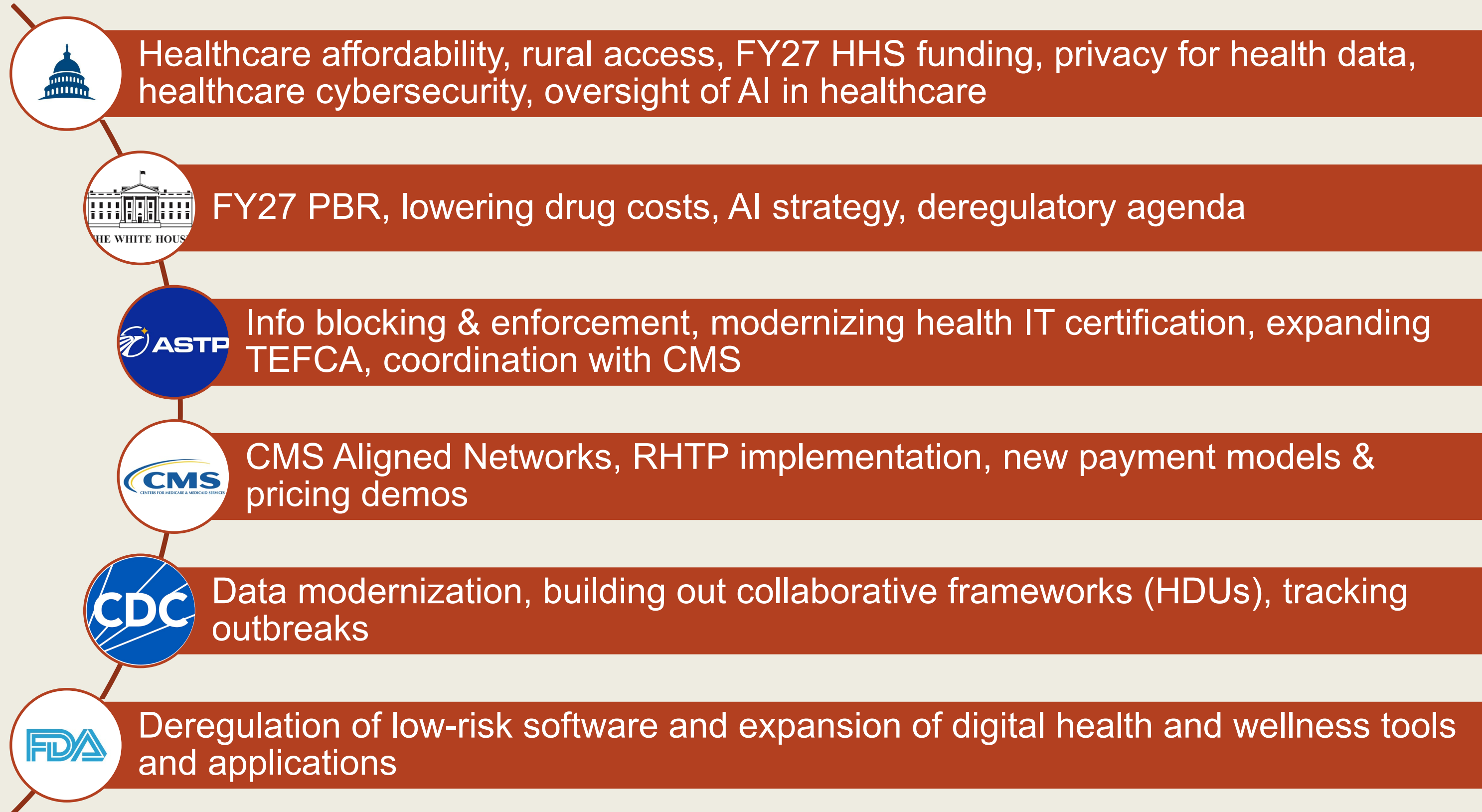
- **119th Congress:** 53 Rs to 47 Ds
- Republican Senators Mitch McConnell (R-KY), Thom Tillis (R-NC), Joni Ernst (R-IA), Cynthia Lummis (R-WY, and Steve Daines (R-MT) are retiring, and Tommy Tuberville (R-AL) is running for Governor
- Democrat Senators Gary Peters (D-MI), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Tina Smith (D-MN) are retiring

Preview: 2026 Midterm Elections

- **435 House members up for reelection**
 - Roughly 17-19 toss-ups with a large majority of seats currently held by Rs
- **33 Senate seats up for election**
 - 22 Rs and 11 Ds
 - Roughly 4 toss-ups (GA, ME, MI, NC)
- **36 gubernatorial races**
 - 18 Rs and 18 Ds
 - Roughly 5 toss-ups (AZ, GA, MI, NV, WI)
- **Key healthcare races to watch**
 - Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-LA), HELP chair facing a tough primary
 - Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME), Appropriations chair facing a competitive reelection
 - Rep. Buddy Carter (R-GA-1), former Health sub chair running for GA senate
 - Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R-IA-1), doctor and E&C health sub in a highly competitive seat
- **Most likely scenario:** Democratic House, Republican Senate. Other states to watch: TX, AK, MN, NH, OH, FL



Healthcare Themes in 2026



Congress – Fiscal Year 2027 Appropriations

- War supplemental likely soon, may include other anomalies
- President's budget request not expected until early April
 - Significant reductions expected, but may come from different places than FY26 request
- House Appropriations
 - Friday, June 5: target subcommittee markup of Labor-HHS
 - Tuesday, June 9: target full committee markup of Labor-HHS
- Senate: TBD on exact timing
- Continuing Resolution (CR) most likely scenario post Sept. 30 until lame duck
- Winner of midterms and administration decide path forward

Congress – Recent Activity

Dr. Tom Keane Hearing – On March 5, the Senate HELP Committee held a hearing titled “Transforming Health Care with Data: Improving Patient Outcomes Through Next-Generation Care”

- **Key Themes:**

1. Enforcing standards that prevent info blocking (ASTP/ONC actively issuing notices of nonconformity)
2. Improving patient access to records
3. HTI-5 removal of several certifications
4. Role of AI with patient access and data security

Sen. Roger Marshall (R-KS): “There's probably what three or four companies that control 80 or 90% of the EMRs out there...is there one that's not being cooperative? Is there, what can we do to encourage them to, to, to help unlock their, their codes?”

Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-LA): “ASTP/ONC has recently proposed a rule to remove 34 certification criteria required for health IT products. Some changes are for criteria no longer in effect. Others include those related to privacy and security...is it because they are merely a regulatory burden for people to bring in new products? Because sometimes regulations restrict market access, or if the removal of these regulations mean that it will be less secure and fewer protections to privacy”

Sen. Tim Kain (D-VA): “During the public health emergency of COVID, HHS required hospitals and providers to report COVID cases to public health agencies. And the CDC also launched a portal for electronic case reporting that ECR is now a quality measure for Medicare. We couldn't have mounted the effective response to COVID without the requirement of data sharing”

Congress – Recent Activity

LINC VA Act (S.3303) – Introduced, by Sen. Dan Sullivan (R-AK), the bill creates a pilot program to establish or enhance a “community integration platform” for services for veterans such as healthcare, house, nutritional assistance, job training, referrals, etc.

- *Defines “community integration platform” as an interoperable platform used to enable the coordination, alignment, and connection of covered entities at the local level for purposes of communication, service coordination, and referral management of services*

Health Care Cybersecurity and Resilience Act (S.3315) – On Feb. 26, the HELP Committee passed Chair Cassidy’s bill requiring HHS and CISA to improve cybersecurity in the healthcare sector

- Updates HIPAA regs for covered entities and business associates to use up-to-date cybersecurity practices
- Creates grants for eligible entities for the adoption and use of cybersecurity best practices, including “a nonprofit entity that enters into a partnership with an eligible entity”

Hearings & Midterm Messaging

- **3/18** E&C hearing on “Lowering Health Care Costs for All Americans: An Examination of the U.S. Provider Landscape”
- **3/17** House Approps LHHS Sub: Oversight of NIH
- **2/24** W&M Health Sub: Advancing the Next Generation of America’s Health Care Workforce
- **2/11** E&C Health Sub: Lowering Health Care Costs for All Americans: An Examination of the Prescription Drug Supply Chain
- **2/3** HELP hearing on Modernization the NIH
- **1/22** E&C Health Sub: Lowering Health Care Costs for All Americans: An Examination of Health Insurance Affordability
- **1/22** W&M hearing with Health Insurance CEOs
- **1/8** E&C Health Sub: Legislative Proposals to Support Patient Access to Medicare Services

Agency – Civitas Meetings and Discussions

- March 11 – CDC meeting at HIMSS
 - Key Takeaway: Produce case examples of HIE-PHA partnerships (permissioned, attributed to networks) and identify the how, along with resolved challenges and methods.
- Feb. 27 – Virtual meeting with Dan Brillman, Deputy Administrator & Director, CMCS
 - Key Takeaway: Civitas providing feedback on barriers to data sharing, successful conditions that enable interoperable infrastructure, and concrete data products/services Civitas members can deliver for CMCS/CMMI
- Jan Virtual Meetings & Feb. 11-13 – ASTP/ONC Annual Meeting
 - ASTP
 - Key Takeaway: Civitas is currently drafting a paper on why local networks (HIEs) matter for trust and how they complement national networks like TEFCA.
 - CDC
 - Key Takeaway: Civitas is planning to use results/data from the 2025 National HIO Survey to fulfill the CDC's request for information on HIE-PHA interactions.

Agency – Recent Activity

Behavioral Health Information Technology (BHIT) Pilot Program – ASTP/ONC and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) announced the selection of nine nationwide pilot programs to test health IT standards that strengthen behavioral and physical health integration through improved data exchange

- *Multiple Civitas member HIEs involved in the program (CO, CT, DC, DE, FL, MA, NC, OR, & RI)*

FDA Clinical Decisions Support (CDS) Guidance – In January, FDA issued updated guidance for CDS software and general wellness products

- FDA clarified its stance on “singular recommendation” outputs for software and emphasizes usability by healthcare professionals
- *Impact: potentially broadens the CDS exemption and encourages development of clinical software tools without burdensome medical-device regulation*

Agency – Recent Activity

HTI-5 Proposed Rule - Proposed deregulatory actions to significantly revise HIT Certification Program and update information blocking regulations

Impact: Could reduce compliance burden on HIT developers and moves federal policy toward API-driven interoperability and AI-enabled tools

Comment highlights: Developers of HIT broadly supportive; public health, networks, and standards orgs raised concerns regarding removal of public health reporting criteria, FHIR readiness, and downstream burden on providers.

Agency – Recent Activity

CMMI New Model Portfolio – LEAD, ACCESS, and MAHA ELEVATE – Wave of new voluntary payment models reflecting admin's MAHA priorities and a broader shift toward prevention, chronic disease management, and whole person care.

Impact: Signals deliberate reorientation of CMMI portfolio toward prevention, lifestyle medicine, and tech-enabled care, particularly in traditional Medicare

Regulatory Agenda

Agency	Stage	Title	RIN
HHS/CMS	Final Rule Stage – Pending OMB review	Administrative Simplification: Adoption of Standards for Health Care Attachment Transactions and Electronic Signatures (CMS-0053)	0938-AT38
HHS/CMS	Proposed Rule Stage	Administrative Simplification: Modifications to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) Electronic Transaction Standards (CMS-0061)	0938-AV43
HHS/CMS	Proposed Rule Stage – Pending OMB review	Interoperability Standards and Prior Authorization for Drugs (CMS-0062)	0938-AV44
HHS/OCR	Final Rule Stage – Expected May 2026	HIPAA Security Rule to Strengthen the Cybersecurity of Electronic Protected Health Information	0945-AA22
HHS/OCR	Final Rule Stage – Expected May 2026	HIPAA Privacy Rule: Changes to support, remove barriers to coordinated care, and individual engagement	0945-AA00
HHS/ASTP/ONC	Proposed Rule Stage – Comments were due 2/27	Health Data, Technology, and Interoperability: ASTP/ONC Deregulatory Actions to Unleash Prosperity (HTI-5)	0955-AA09
HHS/ASTP/ONC	Final Rule Stage – Withdrawal proposal	Health Data, Technology, and Interoperability: Patient Engagement, Information Sharing, and Public Health Interoperability (Remaining parts of HTI-2)	0955-AA08
HHS/OS	Final Rule Stage – Expected May 2026	Health and Human Services Acquisition Regulation: Standards for Health Information Technology	0991-AC35
HHS/OS	Proposed Rule Stage	HHS Acquisition Regulation: Part 339, Acquisition of Information Technology; Other Parts; Supply Chain Risk Management	0991-AC37
HHS/ACF	Proposed Rule Stage	Standards for Data Exchange	0970-AC58

Keep in Touch with the Civitas Team

Scan me!

