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Health Alert

On March 6, 2017, House Republicans in the Committee on Ways and Means and the Committee on Energy and Commerce introduced the American Health Care Act (AHCA), a bill that would repeal and replace key portions of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). The committees will begin considering changes to the bill on Wednesday, March 8, with the goal of passing it within a few weeks. If ultimately passed by Congress and signed into law, the AHCA bill would substantially change portions of the ACA, but it would not repeal the ACA in its entirety.

The bill was introduced under the expedited reconciliation process. Although it has not yet been scored by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the bill may face an uncertain future in light of the Byrd rule, which—among other things—allows senators to block legislation if the legislation significantly increases the deficit after 10 years. In addition, the provisions of the AHCA bill are currently still subject to change either through direct amendment before the bill is voted on, and potentially passed, or through subsequent amendatory bills. The House Republican leadership has said that additional reforms will be proposed in subsequent legislation that will be considered under the usual rules for debate and voting.

Even if the AHCA bill does not ultimately survive the reconciliation process in its current form, or is otherwise not signed into law, the introduction of the AHCA reflects the keen interest of the new Republican-led Congress in reshaping former President Obama's signature health reform law.

Read More: Republicans Release Much Anticipated ACA "Repeal and Replace" Bill, But Will it Fly Under the Byrd Rule?

Special thanks to Isaac Swaiman for his contributions to this alert.

Contacts
Sheree R. Kanner  
Partner

Melissa K. Bianchi  
Partner

Ken Choe  
Partner

Aaron Cutler  
Partner

Elizabeth (Beth) Halpern  
Partner

Beth L. Roberts  
Partner

Craig H. Smith  
Partner

James Huang  
Senior Associate

Jessica Robinson Hanna  
Senior Associate

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