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Grassley Finance Committee Agenda Highlights Oversight

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Senator Charles "Chuck" Grassley, Chairman of the Senate Finance committee which has jurisdiction over Medicare and Medicaid as well as taxation and other revenue measures, has less than 18 months left in his tenure as chairman to effectuate his aggressive oversight and legislative agenda, a hallmark of his nearly four-decade-long career in the Senate. Having already served as Finance chief from 2003 to 2007, the 85-year-old Republican faces a six-year term limitation as the head of this powerful committee.

Since taking the helm in January, Grassley's investigative team has launched inquiries into the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) over drug safety and nursing home oversight, as well as corporations including non-profit organizations over conflicts of interest and possible corruption with opioids and charitable contributions, among other things, with whistleblowers driving a large majority of his investigative agenda.

Apart from the nearly two dozen open investigations, Grassley's top focus, however, is a sweeping drug-pricing bill introduced in late July with Ranking Member Ron Wyden (D-OR). The Prescription Drug Pricing Reduction Act (PDPRA) of 2019, aimed at reducing the cost of prescription drugs for Americans, requires pharmaceutical companies, pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) and insurance companies to increase transparency and pass benefits of negotiated prices to consumers. Having already passed in the Committee by a vote of 19-9, staff has reportedly been working through the August recess to gain consensus of the full Senate on the legislation in preparation for a vote shortly after Congress returns to Washington on September 9. The bill would cap out-of-pocket prescription drug costs for Medicare beneficiaries and save the program \$100 billion over a decade.

In addition, Grassley's policy team is also working on nursing home legislation that would increase CMS transparency requirements and background checks, as well as continues to focus on rural issues with an emphasis on telemedicine. At a [town hall in Des Moines](#) during the August recess, Grassley said he, along with other Senators, will re-introduce the Rural Emergency Acute Care Hospital (REACH) Act which, along with increasing the use of telemedicine, will create a new "rural emergency hospital" designation under Medicare that will enable facilities in rural areas to provide emergency medical services without having to maintain in-patient beds.

For a copy of the PDPRA, [click here](#).