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Watchdog Praises Lawmakers for Not Rushing on Surprise Billing Solution

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the Taxpayers Protection Alliance (TPA) praised lawmakers for agreeing to continue consideration of competing surprise billing proposals past the end of the year. Initial reports suggested that members of Congress had agreed to a proposal that would have utilized government price fixing to solve surprise medical billing disputes, with legislative language poised to be included in end-of-year spending legislation. But, on December 13, *The Hill* [reported](#) that, “A bipartisan bill to protect patients from surprise medical bills is not expected to pass this year due to sharp divisions over the legislation, according to congressional aides in both parties.”

TPA president David Williams praised Congress for taking more time to consider the issue, noting, “surprise medical bills devastate millions of patients each year, but members of Congress such as Rep. Frank Pallone (D-N.J.) and Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) want to ‘solve’ the problem the wrong way by having Washington, D.C. bureaucrats set prices at doctors’ offices. Federal meddling in healthcare led to the surprise billing crisis in the first place, with laws such as Obamacare narrowing insurance networks and leaving patients with fewer options than ever before. Patients can’t afford a top-down ‘fix’ that would close up thousands of doctors’ offices and compromise care for millions of Americans.”

Williams continued: “By extending the surprise billing debate into 2020, members of Congress are giving themselves ample time to consider alternatives to the failure of federal fiat. Passed into law in 2016, Florida’s market-based approach to surprise billing has given patients peace of mind while allowing doctors and insurers to work out their differences. Under the baseball-style ‘arbitration’ model, providers and insurers can negotiate on fair reimbursement rates for out-of-network medical procedures, while protecting taxpayers and patients. Other states such as New York have implemented similar solutions, and the results speak for themselves: out-of-network bills are down 34 percent. Any serious solution to solve surprise billing must include the proven model of arbitration.”

Williams concluded: “As Congress enters the new year, it has its work cut out for it on a number of critical issues. But for the sake of millions of patients across the country, it must figure out a way to fix the pressing problem of surprise medical billing. Lawmakers must reject government meddling, and embrace proven solutions that rely on markets, negotiation, and critical protections for patients.”

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Taxpayers Protection Alliance (TPA) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to educating the public through the research, analysis and dissemination of information on the government's effects on the economy.

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