

## Election Recap November 11, 2016

Tuesday night's election results mean that big changes are coming to Washington next year, with ramifications for public health and health care.

Republican Donald Trump was elected President, and the majority in the House and Senate remain with the Republicans. For the first time since 2008, the same party will control the White House and both chambers in Congress. Fifty-two new Members of Congress were elected Tuesday night. Details about new [House](#) and [Senate](#) members are available.

Congressman Paul Ryan (R-WI) and Senator Mitch McConnell (R-KY) are expected to remain House Speaker and Senate Majority Leader, respectively. With a slim margin in the Senate, Republicans will still have to work with Democrats to get most bills passed. With the retirement of Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV), Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY) is expected to become the next Minority Leader.

One party control of Washington will likely bring further austerity to an already tight budget environment. This will have implications for public health funding. During the campaign, President-elect Trump gave indications he would defer much of the policymaking to Congress, and as a result Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) may have free rein to try to pass a number of his long-desired reforms. Ryan's previously released plans (see: [A Better Way](#)) about block granting Medicaid to the states and providing a defined contribution for Medicare will be reinvigorated. These efforts, if successful, are likely to limit health care access and present a hardship for low income beneficiaries as states have limited ability to invest in these programs.

With regard to a health care/public health agenda for the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress, President-Elect Trump and congressional Republicans have set high expectations for repealing the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Trump and House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) have given broad outlines of what an ACA replacement would look like, including tax credits to help buy insurance, tax-favored Health Savings Accounts and allowing insurers to sell policies across state lines. However, indications are that some of the more popular aspects of the law like a ban on denying coverage based on pre-existing conditions may be spared. (See more analysis from NACCHO on plans to repeal and replace the [ACA here](#).) The health care industry has made big changes responding to the law and is already pushing to preserve at least some of the ACA's benefits. This week some hospital groups were already communicating with lawmakers about the need to be cautious about making changes in the law, because they have largely benefited from reduced uncompensated care costs. In addition, advocacy groups like Families USA, which were heavily involved in passage of the law are gearing up to defend it.



The [Prevention and Public Health Fund](#) is also increasingly vulnerable, both because of its ties to ACA and because Republicans have historically sought to eliminate the Fund or tried to use it to pay for other priorities. The PPHF currently accounts for 13% of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) budget.

In this environment, certain public health issues that have enjoyed bipartisan support will likely continue to receive support. These issues include infectious disease prevention, immunization, opioid abuse prevention and emergency preparedness. Issues like chronic disease prevention and environmental health are likely to fare less well. In addition, climate change and other environmental issues may be blocked under a Trump Administration, with the President-Elect calling global warming a “hoax.” Republican victories in the Senate could also mean continued blocking of domestic climate-change initiatives. Family planning funding is also in danger of deep cuts.

NACCHO has launched a new [Legislative Action Center](#) to allow members to communicate with Members of Congress. This revamped system allows NACCHO members to customize emails to their Members of Congress, search for public health legislation and find contact information for their elected officials. Additional resources and advocacy materials will be forthcoming in the fall and winter.

In the coming weeks and months, NACCHO will seek to educate the Trump transition team and the new Health and Human Services (HHS) political appointees on the important role of local health departments in keeping our nation’s communities healthy and safe. NACCHO members are strongly encouraged to reach out to their Congressional delegation members – whether new or old – to educate their staff on the important work that you do and how the federal investment in public health programs is being utilized at the local level.

### **Questions?**

Contact:

Eli Briggs

NACCHO Senior Government Affairs Director

[ebriggs@naccho.org](mailto:ebriggs@naccho.org)/202-507-4194