



Daily News

McMorris Rodgers Gears Up For Key Health Role With Return To E&C Health Panel

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House Republican Conference Chair Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA) tells *Inside Health Policy* that her reappearance on the Energy and Commerce health subcommittee puts her in key position to brief GOP leadership on important health issues. McMorris Rodgers has sponsored and advocated several health policies in this and previous congressional sessions, including those affecting graduate medical education, rural health clinics, and the 340B drug discount program. She is also the co-chair of the Congressional Neuroscience Caucus.

“I’m pleased to have returned to the Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee,” McMorris Rodgers says in a statement provided to *Inside Health Policy*. “I’m passionate about making quality and affordable healthcare available in Eastern Washington and all across America. Promoting and finding innovative ways to expand care and train primary care doctors is a priority. The need for better healthcare has always been at the forefront of my efforts in Congress and I am better positioned now to brief leadership on these issues,” she adds.

Energy and Commerce Chair Fred Upton (R-MI) announced April 10 that McMorris Rodgers, who had been assigned to the energy & power subcommittee, and health subcommittee member Rep. Ralph Hall (R-TX) would be switching places. Both members vacated their previously assigned subcommittee seats as part of the move

“Cathy McMorris Rodgers was a valuable member of the Health Subcommittee last Congress, and I am pleased she will continue to play an important role in addressing the many challenges facing our nation’s health care system,” Upton said in a statement. “As a mother of two, and as the fourth highest ranking House Republican, she provides an important voice in our ongoing efforts to help patients, assist doctors, and promote innovation and economic growth,” he added.

Stakeholders also praised the move.

“The congresswoman has been a leader on healthcare issues, especially rural and special need issues for years, and Chairman Upton asking her to join the health subcommittee is an asset to the committee and the broader healthcare community,” says Dan Boston, executive director of Health Policy Source.

“We congratulate Rep. McMorris Rodgers’ return to the health subcommittee,” said Ted Slafsky, president and CEO of the Safety Net Hospitals for Pharmaceutical Access, which represents 340B hospitals. “She has been a tireless champion of causes important to health care providers serving large numbers of vulnerable patients. These include access to affordable medications, quality rural health care and adequate reimbursement,” he adds.

A source with the American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC) notes that McMorris Rodgers has been vocal about the importance of building a healthcare system that meets the increasing needs of communities. The source adds that now that the Congresswoman is back on the health subcommittee, she is in a great position to advance the “Training Tomorrow’s Doctors Today” Act” and the “Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act” -- bills aimed at reversing physician shortages. Both bills were introduced earlier this month, and McMorris Rodgers is not currently a co-sponsor.

In February, McMorris Rodgers joined California Democrat Mike Thompson in introducing legislation to create a Medicare

pilot that would fund graduate medical education provided outside of the hospital setting. AAMC does not back this bill out of concerns that it could divert funding from academic medical centers.

McMorris Rodgers has also introduced legislation that would provide Medicare Part D seniors with certain chronic diseases access to medication therapy management services. That bill (HR 1024) now has 23 bipartisan co-sponsors.

Last session, the congresswoman also was a key sponsor of the 340B Improvement Act, which would extend the 340B drug discount program into the inpatient setting, and would repeal a provision that prohibits rural and free-standing cancer hospitals from using the discount program for “orphan drugs” that treat rare diseases. -- *Amy Lotven*

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