

On Friday, June 22, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly cleared a bill that serves as the legislative vehicle for nearly 60 already passed proposals to combat America's opioid epidemic. Its approval concludes months of congressional hearings and two weeks of floor votes on various opioid measures, as well as marks one of Congress' most ambitious efforts yet to address the crisis.

The Substance Use-Disorder Prevention that Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment (SUPPORT) for Patients and Communities Act (H.R. 6) passed 396-14, with 13 Republicans and one Democrat voting in opposition of the bill. The White House conveyed its support for the measure in a [Statement of Administration Policy](#). Additionally, a coalition of 161 patient advocacy groups [urged](#) Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) and Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) to swiftly secure bipartisan support for the package.

The underlying text of the measure incorporates Medicaid, Medicare and public health reforms that were advanced through regular order by the House Ways and Means and Energy and Commerce Committees. H.R. 6 also includes a variety of opioid-related provisions that were previously passed by the House. A [congressional summary](#) of these specific policies is available.

In addition, the House adopted five amendments to the legislation by voice vote:

- An amendment offered by Reps. Joe Barton (R-TX), Mark Meadows (R-NC) and Ann McLane Kuster (D-NH) that would require the Food and Drug Administration commissioner to establish evidence-based prescribing guidelines for the indication-specific treatment of acute pain
- An amendment offered by Rep. John Curtis (R-UT) that would direct the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to develop a report on opioid prescribing practices and opioid misuse during pregnancy
- An amendment offered by Reps. Keith Rothfus (R-PA) and William Keating (D-MA) that would mandate HHS to craft naloxone prescribing guidelines
- An amendment offered by Rep. Maxine Waters (D-CA) that would require HHS to survey substance abuse treatment organizations and consequently develop a plan to address inadequacies in services or funding for specific types of drug addictions

- An amendment offered by Reps. Greg Walden (R-OR), Frank Pallone (D-NJ), Kevin Brady (R-TX) and Richard Neal (D-MA) to make technical changes to the bill

Another amendment offered by Reps. Phil Roe (R-TN), Andy Harris (R-MD) and Neal Dunn (R-FL), all members of the GOP Doctors Caucus, would have struck language expanding the classes of healthcare workers that are authorized to dispense certain forms of medication-assisted treatment for opioid addiction. It was withdrawn.

H.R. 6 now makes its way to the Senate, where lawmakers are preparing to put forth their own opioid epidemic proposal over the summer. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN) is leading efforts to craft this comprehensive legislative measure with his Finance and Judiciary Committee counterparts. While timelines surrounding Senate floor consideration remain unclear, House leadership has expressed a desire to conference the packages in July.

For more information about the bill, please contact one of the lawyers listed in this publication.

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