

Does Ryan plan cause self-rationing? - Coburn: Drop the riders - BCBSA tracks exchange bills - Arizona 'no' to waiver - Women's health rally on the hill

 Listen

By KATE NOCERA & JENNIFER HABERKORN | 04/07/11 8:48 AM EDT

**With reporting contributions from J. Lester Feder and David Nather

CLOSING IN ON A BUDGET DEAL?—That's how President Obama and Harry Reid made it sound after their budget negotiations with John Boehner at the White House Wednesday night. At around 10:45, Obama emerged and said he expects the budget team to "work through the night. In the morning I will check in with the respective staffs of the speaker and the majority leader, as well as my team here. If we haven't made progress, we're going to go back at it again." Reid's statement, issued just after 11 p.m.: "We had a productive conversation and made good progress toward an agreement. I am hopeful that we will be able to announce a compromise agreement soon." The latest from POLITICO's David Rogers: <http://politi.co/fjMxOp>

Good Thursday Morning. "One of these days these boots are gonna Pulse all over you." (Hat tip: ProWeb producer extraordinaire Alex Guillen)

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RYAN PLAN = SELF-RATIONING?—The Ryan plan to privatize Medicare will control costs by requiring seniors to ration themselves, said Michael Tanner with the Cato Institute. "Rationing is going to go on within the Medicare system. It's a fact of life" given financial constraints, he said. "The question's going to be, is that decision going to be made by government and imposed top down under the current system? Ryan wants to shift that responsibility to individuals and from the bottom up."

--Ways and Means ranking member Pete Stark, 79, responded, "When he gets to be where I am, which is touching 80, those extra few months are precious." He continued, "We shouldn't be running around saying we're not going to extend your life a day a week or a month. ... We don't do those death squads or whatever the Republicans call them. I don't think the government should direct somebody to pull the plug." The POLITICO Pro story: <http://politico.pro/hfHopW>

COBURN TO HOUSE GOP: DROP THE RIDERS—Republican Sen. Tom Coburn had some words of advice for his colleagues in the house. While talking

with MSNBC's Dylan Ratigan, Coburn said: "I don't think there is anybody that wants the government to get shut down and so what we ought to say is hey, guys, cool it with the politics, work on the policy for our country and our future." Coburn said politicians can either create a tense "political climate" to get things done or he says, "Another common sense way is: What can I really get done? What's the realities of the situation? And my recommendation to my friends in the House is, you know, it's highly unlikely many riders are going to get passed with a Democrat president and Democrat Senate so why don't you take the spending and let's get on to the budget."

DEFUNDING: NOT FEELING IT—Rep. Steve King says he's worried that the final budget agreement won't include his riders to defund the health care law. "I'm apprehensive about where this is going. I'm just not seeing the signs" that Speaker John Boehner is committed to keeping them, King told reporters during a House vote Wednesday afternoon. "We should have seen it clearly."

BLUES TRACKING 36 EXCHANGE BILLS, WANT UTAH-LIKE EXCHANGES—Thirty-six states have introduced one or more exchange bills already, according to the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association's new state legislative report. "The vast majority of these bills establish the exchanges as a 'market facilitator' or create a task force to recommend how best to design an exchange," said Susan Laudicina, director of state services at BCBSA, which has 39 member plans. The POLITICO Pro story <http://politico.pro/dM0HXL>

ABORTION LANGUAGE THREATENS R.I. EXCHANGE BILL—An exchange-establishing bill that passed the Rhode Island state Senate this week appeared to be on a smooth path to the governor's desk until reform law supporters realized a last-minute amendment went further than the federal law on abortion. Originally supporters thought the amendment kept it consistent with the federal compromise, but now they view it as requiring an abortion "rider" and want it removed or will no longer support it. The controversy puts groups that are neutral on abortion but very pro-exchange in a difficult spot. "This could split the organizations that are trying to be innovative around health care reform and move quickly," Health Right director Amy Black tells PULSE. "People are upset it was presented as the same as federal law when really Rhode Island could be setting precedent." The group and others are hoping an exchange bill can pass the legislature by the time it recesses in early summer – but that timeline now appears to be in limbo. The House is due to take up the bill next week.

** A message from The American Hospital Association: At America's hospitals, caring for our patients is just the beginning. We're open day and night, 365 days a year, to care for everyone who walks through our doors. But we're not here just when you need us. The people of America's hospitals are always working, caring and innovating—strengthening our communities. America's Hospitals: Caring for Patients, Strengthening Communities www.AHA.org/hospitalstory **

PULSE WAIVER WATCH: ARIZONA A NO-GO—We're pulling the state out of our "Leaning Yes" category. Arizona insurance commissioner spokesperson Erin Klug said that right now they aren't going to pursue a waiver. "It's a definite no at this time," she told PULSE. "The bottom line was there was so much criteria we needed to qualify and an awful lot of data and research we just didn't have." She said they might look into it in the future but that the state's market "was really pretty good."

SCOREBOARD

APPROVED - 1 (Maine)

APPLIED - 8 (Fla., Ga., Iowa, Ky., La., N.D., Nev., N.H.)

LEANING YES - 5 (Alaska, Okla., S.C., Texas, W.Va.)

LEANING NO - 21 (Ala., Ariz., Calif., Colo., D.C., Hawaii, Idaho, Ill. Mass., Md., Miss., Mont., N.J., N.M., N.Y., Ore., Penn., Utah, Vt., Wash., Wyo.)

OVERNIGHT HEALTH AFFAIRS: ERRORS HAPPEN IN 1/3 OF HOSPITAL

ADMISSIONS—A Health Affairs report out this morning finds that errors and adverse events occur in one in three hospital admissions. The study, conducted by University of Utah's David C. Classen, concludes that voluntary reporting and AHRQ reports have seriously underestimated – up to about 90 percent of the time – how often errors happen. The Health Affairs report: <http://bit.ly/eAjshn>

SHORT CYCLE DISPENSING RULE DELAYED—CMS has delayed

implementation of a rule that would require long-term care pharmacies to fill certain scripts in seven-day supplies. The rule, a provision of the Affordable Care Act that is meant to cut down pharmaceutical waste in long-term care facilities, will go into effect in January of 2013, instead of January of 2012. Sens. Ron Wyden, Ben Cardin, and Debbie Stabenow sent a letter to Don Berwick last week questioning the actual amount of waste reduction the rule would yield and are “concerned that insufficient data exists to gauge the underlying savings.” The Senators' letter: <http://politico.pro/g7sURL>

TODAY: ABORTION RIGHTS GROUPS ON THE HILL—NARAL, Planned

Parenthood and at least two dozen organizations will gather on Capitol Hill for a “Stand Up For Women's Health” day. The coalition is predicting thousands will attend the rally to protest the “extreme proposals in Congress that take preventive health care and family planning away from women and undermine women's access to the full range of reproductive-health care, including abortion.” Members of Congress slated to appear: Sens. Chuck Schumer, Barbara Boxer, Patty Murray and Reps. Rosa DeLauro and Diana DeGette.

--There will be celebrities too: Connie Britton of “Friday Night Lights” fame, David Eigenberg of “Sex and the City” and Ed Harris are all expected to attend.

MEANWHILE INSIDE CONGRESS—The House Rules committee will meet on

a rule for H.R. 3, the “No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Act” at 3 p.m.

SBA LIST AD BUY—The anti-abortion group Susan B. Anthony List bought nearly \$40,000 worth of ads to run in half a dozen Washington area publications today to coincide with the Planned Parenthood rally on the Hill. The ads say Planned Parenthood's business model relies on abortions and that the group should be privatized because “Women have other options for seeking primary care, contraception, STI testing and cancer screenings.” The ad:

<http://politico.pro/eEoHkR>

ALSO HAPPENING TODAY—BNA is hosting a HR Health Care Compliance

Strategies Conference from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Speakers include Alston + Bird's Ashley Gillihan and David Godofsky; Segal Co.'s Joanne Hustead and Christopher Mathews; McGuire Woods's James P. McElligott Jr. and McKenna, Long & Aldridge's Cindy Gillespie ... Express Scripts is releasing a report on drug trends that shows by changing patient behavior, they can remove more than 33.2 percent of pharmacy waste ... Rep. Tom Price and Galen Institute fellow Jason Fodeman will speak at a Galen forum today at 2 p.m. Docs4PatientCare will be there, too.

OSTEOPATHS FLOOD THE HILL—The American Osteopathic Association is headed to the Hill today. Rep. Joe Heck, the first osteopath to get elected since the 1930s, will speak to the AOA and then over 650 osteopathic physicians will head to member officers.

ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEONS RUSH IN, TOO—The American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons will be on the Hill, too. The group's top issues are getting a sponsor for legislation to bring increased awareness to musculoskeletal diseases, as well as passing medical liability reform, repealing the IPAB and preserving in-office ancillary services.

THE BOOMING VOICE WINS—We have no idea who's going to win the budget standoff, but we know who wins the "Best Voice at a Crowded Budget Stakeout" contest. When John Boehner gives a press conference, you can hear that booming baritone voice all the way down the hallway. That's good on a day like Wednesday, when Pulse was stuck behind huge crowds of reporters. When you're at a Harry Reid press conference, you can be standing right next to him and still not hear him.

WHAT WE'RE READING by David Nather

California Healthline's Dan Diamond suggests that the Ryan plan maybe isn't that radical. <http://bit.ly/grECL8>

A new Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll finds 56 percent of Republicans want their party to fight for budget cuts, but 66 percent of independents want them to compromise. <http://on.wsj.com/fpEKYj>

CBO says Paul Ryan's Medicare plan could lead to rationing, NPR's Julie Rovner reports. <http://n.pr/dVERjD>

A new report says drug spending rose only 3.6 percent last year, The Wall Street Journal reports. <http://on.wsj.com/dM7aUZ>

The Virginia Senate voted to ban insurers in the state's health exchange from covering abortion except in cases of rape, incest or threat to the mother's life, the Richmond Times-Dispatch reports. <http://bit.ly/gyivTv>

Rep. Michael Burgess doesn't think medical malpractice reform has a snowball's chance in the Senate, Modern Healthcare reports. <http://bit.ly/hvJOIG>

In a Kaiser Health News column, Sabrina Corlette says states should borrow exchange ideas from both Massachusetts and Utah. <http://bit.ly/i16JDJ>

The Washington Post's Ezra Klein ticks off the keys to controlling health care costs. <http://wapo.st/fNOCrg>

In the New England Journal of Medicine, Henry Aaron says Paul Ryan's Medicare plan is not the kind of "premium support" he had in mind when he coined the phrase. <http://bit.ly/ej6Vh4>

Writing in Forbes, Merrill Matthews says state flexibility would lead blue states and red states in wildly different directions. <http://bit.ly/gLDPcB>

A Commonwealth Fund study of four hospitals with low readmission rates lays

out the lessons other hospitals can learn. <http://bit.ly/dXFkcY>

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