

Eli's Hospice Insider

Appointments: HHS Secretary, CMS Administrator Confirmed

What's in store?

Former Congressman **Tom Price** has been confirmed as **Health and Human Services** Secretary for over a month now, but regulatory relief has yet to follow for hospices.

On Feb. 10 senators voted 52-47 along party lines to approve the former practicing ortho surgeon for the post. The move came after Democrats boycotted a Senate Finance Committee vote earlier in the week to advance the nomination. The full Senate vote was held in the middle of the night due to procedural delays initiated by Democrats.

When **President-Elect Trump** announced Price as his nominee on Nov. 29, state and national trade groups were quick to praise him (see Eli's Hospice Insider, Vol. 10, No. 1). They continue to pin regulatory relief hopes on the former Republican congressman from Georgia after the vote.

Most urgently, home health agencies have hoped Price would suspend the Pre-Claim Review demonstration project set to take effect in Florida April 1. But as the start date approaches, those hopes have grown dim.

Pence Protégé Nabs CMS Administrator Spot

Meanwhile, President Trump's nominee for Administrator of CMS encountered some tough questions, but relatively little opposition, during her confirmation process. The Senate approved **Seema Verma** for the top spot on March 13.

Verma's vague answers to policy questions frustrated Democratic senators looking to allay coverage concerns and Republican senators seeking support for Medicaid block grants, according to press reports.

While Medicaid reform would seem to be the Trump administration and Verma's first goal, a Medicare revamp may not be far behind. And based on the HIP program Verma helped implement in Indiana, it could feature cost sharing, observers predict.