Federal Legislation & Regulation of Interest Fall 2019

1. Our coalition of rural stakeholders ask that the U.S. Senate Finance Committee act with urgency to pass meaningful legislation to address the grave health inequities that plague rural America. Senate Finance Committee ‘Rural Health Bill’ includes
   1. Hospital relief [48% of rural hospitals are operating at a loss]
   2. Workforce enhancements
   3. Telehealth
   4. Rural Clinic modernization
2. H.R. 2339, the Reversing Youth Tobacco Epidemic Act of 2019. This comprehensive legislation, introduced by Congressman Frank Pallone and Congresswoman Donna Shalala, confronts the current youth-e-cigarette epidemic that is threatening to reverse years of progress in reducing youth use of cigarettes and other tobacco products.
3. Rural Maternal and Obstetric Modernization of Services Act [MOMS] introduced by Senator Tina Smith (D-MN)
4. Introduced on Rural Health Day 11/21: Strengthening our Rural Health Workforce Act of 2019 <https://brownfieldagnews.com/news/strengthening-our-rural-health-workforce-act-introduced-in-senate/>
5. Rural ACO Improvement Act S 2648
6. **Rural Development** – $3.1 billion for Rural Development (RD) to support RD’s mission areas, approved in Committee in September 2019 including:

* **Water & Electric Infrastructure** – $1.45 billion for rural water and waste program loans, the same as the FY2019 enacted level; $400 million for water and waste grants and $19.5 million for the Circuit Rider program.  The bill also provides $6.94 billion for rural electric and telephone infrastructure loans and $64 million for Distance Learning /Telemedicine and Broadband grants.
* **Rural Housing Loans and Rental Assistance** – $24 billion in loan authority for the Single Family Housing guaranteed loan program, equal to the FY2019 enacted level and the President’s request.  It includes $1 billion for the direct loan program, which provides low-income rural families with home loan assistance.  In addition, $1.375 billion is provided for rental assistance for affordable rental housing for low-income families and the elderly in rural communities for renewal of all existing rental assistance contracts.
* **Business and Industry Loans** – The legislation supports $1 billion in grants and loans for rural business and industry programs that promote small business growth in rural areas.  The bill includes funding for the Healthy Food Financing Initiative to improve access to affordable, healthy foods in underserved areas.