

Blog

Rural Hospitals and Clinicians Await Washington's Next Move

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Healthcare facilities in rural areas have increasingly been under pressure. Access to care, physician shortages, shrinking reimbursement and gaps in insurance coverage have plagued patients in "Middle America." On Election Day, rural Americans disproportionately voted for Donald Trump. Now, rural residents and the healthcare industry are anxious to see what direction the new administration will take to address the concerns of these citizens.



Twenty percent of the nation lives in rural America, and according to this year's exit polls, rural voters made up 17 percent of the electorate, according to the National Rural Health Association. Now that Rural Americans seemingly have Washington's ear, hospital administrators across the country trying to guess what impact Trump will have on the industry, particularly if he will work to repeal the controversial Affordable Care Act (ACA).

In a recent *Modern Healthcare* article, Kaiser Permanente CEO Bernard Tyson said that while Trump has said that he wants to repeal the ACA, the president-elect "seems to agree that everyone ought to have affordable, high-quality care and access."

Dr. Rebecca Parker, president of the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP), said in a recent [press release](#) that emergency physicians are committed to working with the new Congress and President to address the critical issues facing patients. ACEP is focusing its efforts on putting pressure on the insurance industry to address gaps in coverage.

"State and federal policymakers need to ensure that health insurance plans provide adequate rosters of physicians, affordable deductibles and co-pays and fair payment for emergency services," said Dr. Parker.

Emergency physicians represent only 4 percent of all doctors, but provide care for 28 percent of all acute care visits, 50 percent of all Medicaid and CHIP visits and 67 percent of acute care given to uninsured patients, according to ACEP.

Rick Pollack, President and CEO of the American Hospital Association, released a [statement](#) last week, reasserting his organization's goals: "Amid the changing political landscape, our priorities remain the same – advancing the transformation of healthcare, ensuring access to coverage, preserving adequate resources for healthcare, protecting patient access to care, enhancing the quality of care and patient safety, and making healthcare more affordable."

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