

Senators Resolved GOP-Sought Changes to Opioids Bill (Corrected)

By Katherine Scott and Shira Stein | September 5, 2018 7:19AM ET

Republican lawmakers say they've resolved objections from within their conference and are ready to vote on an opioids package as soon as Democrats are done negotiating for the changes they want.

"They still have some holds on the Democratic side that they're trying to work through," said Sen. [John Cornyn](#) (R-Texas).

The House has passed a wide-ranging package ([H.R. 6](#)) in June intended to address opioid abuse. That measure would change Medicare and Medicaid payment rules to expand Medicaid reimbursement for inpatient drug rehabilitation services; amend privacy rules for drug treatment records; and let Medicare pay more for non-opioid pain-management drugs.

The Senate's package is anchored by a bill ([S. 2680](#)) that proposes fewer changes to payment eligibility and privacy of patient records.

[Senate to Take Up Opioids Bill After Labor Day](#)
[Senators Squabble Over Demands for Opioids Bill](#)
[Proposals to Tackle the Opioid Crisis: BGOV OnPoint](#)

Assistant Democratic Leader [Patty Murray](#) (Wash.) told Bloomberg Government senators are still negotiating changes to the opioids bill. She didn't identify the remaining points of contention.

Sen. [Claire McCaskill](#) (D-Mo.) previously told Bloomberg Law that she wanted to expand the rules for divulging payments from drugmakers to doctors to include specialty societies and other nonprofit groups that offer advice on safe prescribing.

[Opioids Bill Delayed as Senators Squabble Over Demands](#)

"There are way too many payments going to not-for-profit groups and to doctors that has frankly clouded the American people's judgment about the dangers of opioids," she said.

Sen. [Rob Portman](#) (R-Ohio) said he placed a hold on the package while trying to convince colleagues to incorporate a proposal ([S. 372](#)) that would require the Postal Service to change the way it tracks international shipments of the drug fentanyl.

Portman said he backed down after being promised the chance to push for additional provisions in conference.

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