

# CAPITOL STREET

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January 22, 2025

## **RFK Jr Confirmation Hearing in Senate Finance Weds, Jan 29**

Senate Votes to Watch: Cassidy, Sanders, Curtis, Murkowski, Collins

Relevant Companies

ALL HEALTHCARE

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### »» Our Take & Next Up

**SFC Chairman Crapo (R-ID) announced an RFK Jr. nomination hearing for Jan 29, 2025.** The Finance Committee announcement this evening calls for a ten AM hearing one week from today. Link [here](#). The all-important Senate Finance Committee will ask questions of the nominee, as well as ask for answers for the record. The committee may not vote at this meeting; they may wait for the next executive session. Recall HHS Secretary, as other nominees, only requires 51 votes. Due to the slim Senate majority, RFK can only afford to have 3 Republicans oppose him with J.D. Vance's tie-breaking vote. Some have surmised Dem votes are doable (Sanders, Booker, others). If RFK Jr. generates significant opposition, there is time for President Trump to select another candidate. Pro-life groups, led by Mike Pence, and the food industry, is lobbying hard to get RFK Jr's candidacy derailed.

### »» Key Points

**The Senate HELP Committee (Chair Cassidy, R-LA) will hear from RFK, Jr on Thurs, Jan 30, one day later.** STAT [news](#) notes that the Committee will hear from RFK Jr as a courtesy, but will not vote on the HHS Secretary nominee. Recall RFK Jr needs 51 votes to be confirmed as HHS Secretary.

**We expect Senators to intensely question RFK, Jr's on his vaccine and mandate stances, among other issues.**

- **We have said that we do not believe the polio vaccine will be pulled.** Recall that Mitch McConnell, a key Senate Republican, suffered from polio. We note RFK Jr. stated that he would not remove specific vaccines from the market and would instead seek to promote "informed choice".
- **One thing we could see is the EUA status pulled for existing COVID vaccines.** This can be done quickly and easily. Several pediatric COVID vaccines (MRNA, PFE, and NVAX) and updated vaccine boosters (NVAX, PFE, and MRNA) are authorized for emergency use. 2 COVID vaccines are fully approved by the FDA: Comirnaty (PFE) and Spikevax (MRNA).
- **Clinical trials for vaccines will also likely be under increased scrutiny under RFK Jr.** RFK Jr. has spoken at length about the need to return to "gold standard, evidence-based science" and to collect

additional evidence on vaccine safety. As a reminder, vaccines are tested through randomized controlled trials and through observational studies under real-world conditions. His concerns with vaccines echo his other healthcare views on anti-establishment/anti-industry and anti-additive views in food and water. We may see additional data required from manufacturers to justify nonactive ingredients and preservatives in vaccines.

- **His perspective on addiction care and his past drug history may come up.** RFK Jr.'s previous addiction history and how he overcame it informs his views on substance use care. Senators may have questions on his idea of "healing farms" as [reported](#) by *NYT*.
- **His recently disclosed financials will also likely be discussed.** Senators will likely question the conflict of interests with his biotech investment and his nonprofit organizations. RFK is planning to divest biotech stock holdings including, CRISPR Therapeutics AG and Dragonfly Therapeutics. He's also stepping down from roles at his law firm and at the anti-vaccine nonprofit Children's Health Defense.

**He will likely also face questioning on prevention and wellness, GLP-1s.** RFK, Jr wants to promote nutrition and prevention, both at the agency and for all Americans. He has been critical of GLP-1s in the past. We note that CMS found a creative way to cover in MA & Part D via 2026 rulemaking (our take [here](#)). We expect the Trump administration may finalize this coverage policy, classifying obesity a disease versus the medicines addressing weight loss. Kennedy and his allies have railed against big pharmaceutical companies making profits on sick Americans. As a reminder, 2027 drug negotiations will include the GLP-1, semaglutide (OZEMPIC, RYBELSUS, WEGOVY), whose negotiated price could have class wide effects.

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