

IN THE NEWS

News for LTC Professionals
in 100 Words-or-Less

Edited by Drew Vogel

drewvogel5255@msn.com

Vol 10

02/22/2026

They said it

"There is no excuse for delay, and no acceptable outcome other than returning these dollars to the American people" DOL Inspector General Anthony D'Esposito after audits found nearly \$1 billion in unused COVID-era unemployment benefits - \$720 million in prepaid debit cards

"It's a way to siphon off money. We just can't allow it. If everything were fine in nursing homes, it wouldn't be as big of a deal. But obviously, that is not the case" Conn. State Rep. Jane Garibay, co-chair of the Aging Committee, on owners who pay family members inflated salaries

"Residents should not be tricked into signing away their legal rights because a nursing home tucked a waiver into their admission agreement" NJ Long-Term Care Ombudsman Laurie Facciarossa Brewer said in a statement to the New Jersey Monitor discussing a bill that would standardize LTC contracts

Most of the Job Growth Happened in Elder Care

The U.S. added 130,000 jobs in January, according to federal data released this week. But a closer look shows that the lion's share of this growth came from one specific task: caring for older Americans.

Grouped under the formal categories of "social assistance" and "healthcare," long-term care facilities, at-home care services and hospitals added 124,000 positions.

Much of this expansion was among the tens of thousands of aides and assistants who help elderly and disabled people bathe, dress, eat and manage their daily lives. Their work is essential — and booming — but it is also physically demanding and often modestly paid.

NBC News, 02/13/2026

Proposed NJ Law Would Standardize LTC Contracts

The bill cleared the Senate's health committee on Feb. 9. It's designed to help people signing up to live in a long-term care facility and add protections when they enroll in Medicaid.

It would require the state Department of Health to develop standardized contracts for SNFs and ALFs and assisted living. It would create state regulations around the role of Medicaid 'assistors,' who help residents enroll in public health benefits.

It would also prohibit anyone who owns, works for, or is affiliated with a nursing home from providing legal or financial guidance to someone seeking admission to that facility.

New Jersey Monitor, 02/19/2026

The First 'Dementia Village' To Be Built in the U.S.

The first-ever "Dementia Village" in the United States is underway in Wisconsin.

The \$40 million community will be built near Madison, on the Fitchburg campus of Agrace, a community-based nonprofit healthcare agency.

It's modeled after similar, successful communities in Netherlands, and is expected to house up to 65 people with similar interests and dementia diagnoses.

The community is designed to resemble a neighborhood, not a nursing home and will include a restaurant, spa, and a grocery store, as well as housing for staff and caretakers.

Plans include the construction of eight homes, each designed to house eight residents.

WMTV-TV, 02/16/2026

SNF for Kids Admits Wrongdoing Will Pay \$1.3 M

An Albany nursing home that cares for some of the state's most vulnerable children will pay \$1.3 million after investigators found it had neglected its young residents for years while fraudulently billing Medicaid for care it failed to provide.

St. Margaret's Center, a not-for-profit pediatric skilled nursing facility operated by the Center for Disability Services, endangered chronically ill and disabled children from 2018 through 2023 by consistently understaffing the facility and failing to meet basic standards of care, according to a court settlement the facility reached with state and federal authorities.

The facility admitted wrongdoing.

Albany Times Union, 02/14/2026

Locked Door Wasn't Resident Dies in Snow

New details have emerged in the case of a 93-year-old woman who died after she was found in a snowbank outside a nursing home in Windsor Locks, Connecticut.

Video showed Margaret Healey walked out of Bickford Health Care Center at 1:50 a.m. through an employee entrance that was supposed to be closed and locked but allegedly was often left propped open.

She was found by staff three hours and 17 minutes later.

Police said this door is not equipped with a "Wander Guard" system but is designed to remain closed and locked with a keypad system.

WTNH-TV, 02/12/2026

LTC Staffing Rule Reintroduced In Congress

A group of seven Democratic senators is introducing legislation backing a new nursing home staffing rule that imposes standards similar to those included in repealed federal regulations.

The Act calls for an additional \$800 million in enforcement funding and would require CMS to tap civil monetary funds to provide significant investments in the long-term care workforce.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR), would amend Medicare and Medicaid statutes to establish minimum staffing standards - 24/7 RNs and 3.48 total nursing hours PPD.

It is unlikely to advance in a Republican-controlled Congress.

McKnight's, 02/31/2026

IN THE TRENCHES –

Vaccines, COVID, Flu, Measles & Other Outbreaks Around the World

WASHINGTON, D.C.: Staff members at the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) have been told to delete the words “biodefense” and “pandemic preparedness” from the institute’s website, a move that experts say will hobble the U.S.s’ ability to respond to future infectious disease threats. Staffers said NIAID likely will deprioritize its traditional research pillars of HIV, biodefense, and pandemic preparedness as part of a broader reorganization. Since President Donald Trump took office the NIH workforce has been reduced by roughly 20% through layoffs or resignations (*Nature*).

CAPITOL HILL: Dozens of Democratic lawmakers are calling for the removal of two OB-GYNs who were recently appointed to the nation’s top vaccine advisory committee, citing the doctors’ “well-documented history” of anti-vaccine ideology. The lawmakers said in a letter to HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. that they were concerned about the January appointments of Dr. Adam Urato and Dr. Kimberly Biss to the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) for the CDC (*Congressional Democrats Letter*).

TURKEY: Although President Trump has pulled out of the organization, the U.S. will participate in the World Health Organization’s (WHO) upcoming meeting on the composition of the influenza vaccine despite officially withdrawing from the global group last month. The WHO will meet on Feb. 26 in Turkey to discuss the composition of the 2026-2027 flu vaccine for the northern hemisphere (*The Hill*).

THE WORLD: A study finds no increase in autism rates in babies born to mothers who received COVID-19 vaccines just before or during pregnancy, compared with children of unvaccinated moms. The authors of the study said they hope the research will help dispel myths about COVID-19 vaccines, which multiple studies have found to be safe and

effective during pregnancy (*Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine*).

AMERICA: A new survey from the Annenberg Public Policy Center (APPC) of the University of Pennsylvania shows a small yet significant decline in the perceived safety of influenza, COVID-19, and measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccines among American adults. Though most Americans think all three of those vaccines are safe to take, there has been a decline over the past three years in perceived safety (*CIDRAP*).

THE WORLD: Children who were restricted during the pandemic have shown a decline in physical skills – to run, balance, skip, throwing, catching, etc. Researchers looked at 278,000 children ages 3-to19 in 11 studies. Ten of the 11 studies showed a decline in children’s physical skills linked to lockdown, school closures, lack of PE and more screen time during the pandemic (*Journal Of Sports Science*).

WISCONSIN: A University of Wisconsin-Madison student is recovering after seeking medical care for a confirmed case of measles the university said in an email to all students. The student lives in an apartment off-campus and visited several campus locations during their infectious period from Jan. 25 to Jan. 28. About 4,000 people who may have been exposed have been notified directly by the university (*The Daily Cardinal*).

WASHINGTON, D.C.: The Labor Department’s OIG is warning that nearly \$1 billion of COVID-19-era unemployment benefits is sitting unused and ripe for fraud. OIG found that some \$720 million in unemployment insurance benefits are sitting on prepaid debit cards, while another \$192 million has been moved to state unclaimed property offices (*The NY Post*).

SOUTH CAROLINA: The Department of Health confirmed 13 new measles cases raising the state total to 933. Currently 235 people are in quarantine and six in isolation. Among 876 patients with known details, 859 were unvaccinated, 20 were partially vaccinated, and 25 were fully vaccinated. Twenty-nine have unknown vaccination status (*CIDRAP*).

UTAH: Utah has confirmed 300 measles cases in an ongoing outbreak, with the virus now affecting 32 people in Salt Lake County and new exposures at high schools in that county. Utah County has 41 and Southwest Utah health district has 194. Of the 300 measles cases, 58 have been identified in the past 3 weeks, and 255 occurred in patients who are unvaccinated (*CIDRAP*).

WASHINGTON, D.C.: Health officials are warning that confirmed cases of measles may have spread at this year’s National March for Life rally and concert in Washington. Thousands of anti-abortion demonstrators converged upon the National Mall and other locations in the nation’s capital for the annual event at the end of January. (*NPR*).

FLORIDA: The Department of Health reports new cases of measles are popping up across the state, with 15 illnesses confirmed statewide, according to data from other cases, including 20 in Collier County and one in Pinellas County, don’t show up on the department’s website. It updates every Thursday, and by then the information is many days old. As of Monday, the case count was through Jan. 31 (*WUSF*).

ATLANTA: Members of the federal vaccine panel chosen by Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. are setting their sights on the next targets: the mRNA COVID shots and vaccines offered to pregnant women. Several of the panelists have said - contrary to scientific consensus - that they believe the COVID shots are dangerous and should be taken off the market. The panel, called the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, already has imposed some limits on access to COVID vaccines. (*New York Times*).

COVID-19 02/19/2026

World Total Cases
779,115,637

World Total Deaths
7,110,996

U.S. Total Deaths
1,234,749

World Health Organization

Vaccine Makers Curtail Research and Cut Jobs

When Robert F. Kennedy Jr. became HHS secretary, public health experts worried that the longtime vaccine skeptic would wreak havoc on the fragile business of vaccine development.

That fear has apparently started to become a reality.

In Massachusetts, Moderna is pulling back on vaccine studies.

In Texas, a small company canceled plans to build a factory that would have created new jobs manufacturing a technology used in vaccines.

In San Diego, another manufacturing company laid off workers.

The New York Times, 02/16/2026

M'caid Caps Sought for Union Buildings that Hire Kin

Connecticut officials are asking lawmakers to craft a bill that would limit Medicaid payments for unionized nursing homes whose owners hire family members at inflated salaries.

The state already has a law that caps non-union facilities.

Medicaid reimbursements would be capped at the average salary for the position occupied by the family member. So, if a nursing home owner hired a relative as a CNAs and paid that worker twice the average salary, the reimbursement would be limited to the average salary for that position.

CT Mirror, 02/18/2026

Most Are Back, One Group Still Wielding Picket Signs

A month-long nurses strike in New York City is coming to an end, but not for everyone.

Nurses at Montefiore and Mount Sinai hospitals voted to approve new three-year contracts, clearing the way for about 10,500 nurses to return to work in the coming days.

The new contract includes pay raises totaling more than 12% over three years; no added out-of-pocket costs for health

benefits, and; new protections against workplace violence.

About 5000 nurses at New York-Presbyterian rejected their proposed deal and remain on strike.

HealthDay News, 02/13/2026

Adjusted Vermont Budget Gives More to Nursing Homes

Vermont lawmakers are moving forward with a mid-year adjustment to the state's fiscal year 2026 budget,

One of the largest drivers of new spending in the adjustment is health care, particularly Medicaid utilization and provider support.

The adjustment also provides \$14.1 million through Global Commitment for "Extraordinary Financial Relief" for nursing homes, a sector that has faced persistent financial strain from staffing costs and patient acuity changes.

Additional funds are included for Medicaid-related rate changes, including a rate increase for Area Agencies on Aging case management providers beginning April 1, 2026, and restoration of certain enhanced residential care rates.

Vermont Daily Chronicle, 02/16/2026

Fraud Recoveries From Providers Way Up in 2025

Civil fraud recoveries from the healthcare sector more than tripled between 2024 and 2025, signaling that the Trump administration will continue to press hard for provider investigations and financial penalties.

After brief relief in 2024, skilled nursing operators — long a target of whistleblower-led False Claims Act cases — also were subject to more traditional liability claims last year.

Overall, federal civil recoveries jumped nearly 150% to reach \$6.9 billion in 2025. Providers accounted for 83% (\$5.72B). And their share grew exponentially from 2024, when healthcare cases accounted for just \$1.67 billion, the lowest level in more than a decade.

*Bass, Berry & Sims'
Healthcare Fraud & Abuse Review
2026*

ONE COLUMN

Senior Living Deals in '25 smashed all Records

Senior housing and care mergers and acquisition activity in 2025 smashed the previous annual record of publicly disclosed transaction volume set in 2024.

There were 871 transactions in 2025, 20.8% more than the previous record of 721 in 2024.

The number of publicly announced senior housing and care acquisitions in the fourth quarter of 2025 rose to 285 deals, a new quarterly record. This total represents a 34.4% increase from the previous quarterly record of 212 deals set in Q3:25.

It is also a 47.7% increase from Q4:24's total of 193 transactions.

In addition, the \$15.19 billion spent on Q4:25 transactions, based on disclosed purchase prices, rose by 297.6% from the \$3.82 billion spent on Q3:25 transactions and by 331.5% from the \$3.52 billion spent in the year-ago quarter.

October's \$10.08 billion spending, the highest publicly announced dollar volume recorded in a single month, accounted for 66.4% of Q4:25's total dollar volume.

Total publicly disclosed spending on seniors housing and care deals in 2025 reached \$30.5 billion, 177% from the \$11 billion in 2024, marking the highest annual total in more than 10 years.

In 2025, senior housing accounted for 59% of the total deals, with skilled nursing comprising the remaining 41%. In contrast, seniors housing represented 56.3% of 2024's deals, and skilled nursing was 43.7%.

Assisted living deals made up the plurality of Q4:25 deals, accounting for 44%, followed by skilled nursing at 32%.

The senior care M&A market in 2025 benefited from the improved capital markets environment, resulting in a year full of records, larger deals, increased occupancy, higher quality assets for sale, more buyers, and more sellers.

The Senior Care Acquisition Report, 01/12/2026

Nursing Home BOM Accused Of Stealing Over \$300,000

Christina Williams, the former office manager at Venetian Gardens Nursing Home in Loveland, Ohio – near Cincinnati – is accused of stealing more than \$300,000 from more than 50 residents over a period of years.

Police received an initial theft report in May 2025. After a lengthy investigation that lasted almost a year, detectives identified the 51-year-old Williams as the suspect.

The county grand jury recently indicted Williams on 56 counts of felony theft,

Williams was booked into the Clermont County Jail. Bond was set at \$30,000.

WXIX-TV, 02/16/2026

Campaign Aims to Showcase The Benefits of LTC

AHCA/NCAL has launched a new educational campaign to help policymakers and the general public understand the wide range of services offered by assisted living and skilled nursing providers.

The “Live Fully” campaign, which will share information and real-life stories through a website with text and video as well as social media, aims to show the value and impact of providers across a continuum of long-term care on the lives of residents, staff members and communities.

Provider types include assisted living and memory care communities as well as nursing homes, skilled nursing facilities and rehabilitation facilities.

Senior Living, 02/13/2026

CareTrust REIT Acquires Six-SNFs for \$142 Million

CareTrust has acquired a portfolio of six skilled nursing facilities in the Mid-Atlantic for approximately \$142 million. The locations were not disclosed.

The transaction builds on last year’s momentum, which saw approximately \$1.8 billion of investments, including CareTrust’s entry into the United Kingdom

market with the \$817 million acquisition of Care REIT, which at the time had a portfolio with 137 care homes with a total of approximately 7,500 operating beds leased to 15 operators across England, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

CareTrust has closed approximately \$3.3 billion in LTC investment over the past two years.

Senior Living, 01/06/2026

Providers Urging New Rules In Final ‘27 MA Revamp

Provider groups are calling on CMS to adopt new rules that hold Medicare Advantage plans more accountable for arbitrary denials.

The comments come as CMS weighs a spate of technical changes to the MA Program for 2027, which are separate from the proposed pay and coding changes announced recently.

Federal regulators are likely to update enrollment and a new way to calculate star ratings for MA plans next year as CMS called for comments from providers.

McKnight’s, 02/02/2026

No Big Changes to Workforce Without Dollars, Immigration

Immigration policies that would allow more foreign-born workers into the US and greater infusions of cash need to be pillars of any plans to build the nursing home workforce back to pre-pandemic levels.

Deepon Bhaymik, PhD, lead researcher of a new *Health Affairs* study said establishing career pathways to support retention within the sector, as well as “strengthening organizational leadership and retention of local leaders” also are keys.

He also endorsed changes to workplace culture that include increasing job satisfaction among staff, consistent assignment and more scheduling predictability.

McKnight’s, 02/02/2026

Briefly in the News

Jay Bhattacharya, the head of the National Institutes of Health, will become acting director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention following the departure last week of interim director Jim O’Neill. Officials at the White House and administration said President Donald Trump will name O’Neill to lead the National Science Foundation (*Politico*).

The FDA plans to drop its longtime standard of requiring two rigorous studies to win approval for new drugs, the latest change from Trump administration officials vowing to speed up the availability of certain medical products. Going forward, the FDA’s “default position” will be to require one study for new drugs and other novel health products (*New England Journal of Medicine*).

In a 2023 survey, 49% of American men said they would be open to trying a male contraceptive. The same survey showed a majority of female partners outside the U.S. would trust men with birth control. A separate survey conducted in 2023 and published this year found that two-thirds of American women were interested in their partner using birth control, and 75% of them thought their partners would be open to using it (*Stat*).

A newly proposed rule from the U.S. Department of Education that would cap the amount that new nursing and other graduate students can receive in federal financial aid troubles home health providers. Students in nursing, physical therapy, physician assistants, occupational therapy and social work — will be capped at \$20,500 annual with a \$100,000 aggregate limit, with no ability to borrow above that through federal student loans (*Home Care*).

Broad River Rehabilitation and Aegis Therapies have formed a national rehab company in a deal being painted as a merger of complementary post-acute therapy providers. Broad River operates in 250 facilities in 16 mostly Southern states. Aegis traces its roots back to the gigantic Beverly Enterprises nursing home chain of decades ago. It operates in 525 facilities in 45 states (*McKnight’s*).