SENATE CONFIRMS ALEX AZAR AS NEW HHS SECRETARY
DESPITE DEMOCRATS’ OPPOSITION

Senate Republicans and six Democrats voted in favor on confirming President Donald Trump’s nominee to be HHS Secretary, Alex Azar, approving his nomination 55-43. Azar’s confirmation ends Acting HHS Secretary Eric Hargan’s time at the department following former Secretary Tom Price’s resignation after a private plane scandal.

Six Democrats and one Independent voted in favor of Azar’s nomination, including Sens. Tom Carper (D-DE), Chris Coons (D-DE), Joe Donnelly (D-IN), Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND), Doug Jones (D-AL), Joe Manchin (D-WV) and Angus King (I-ME). Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY) was the only Republican to vote against Azar’s nomination. Both Sens. Bob Corker (R-TN) and John McCain (R-AZ) did not vote.

Although the majority of Democrats stood against Azar, Carper said that he voted in favor of Trump’s HHS secretary because Azar shares his goal “of transforming our current health care system, which can often lead to mistreatment and overuse, to one that rewards health care providers based on the quality of care patients receive.” Carper added that he intends to monitor Azar’s actions to ensure he follows through on his promises.

During nomination hearings held by the Senate Finance Committee and Senate Health Committee, Democrats criticized Azar’s history as a pharmaceutical executive for Eli Lilly USA, saying he significantly raised prices during his tenure. Democrats also criticized his views on the Affordable Care Act and were skeptical that he would work to uphold the law.

Health care advocates and stakeholders had mixed reactions to Azar’s confirmation.