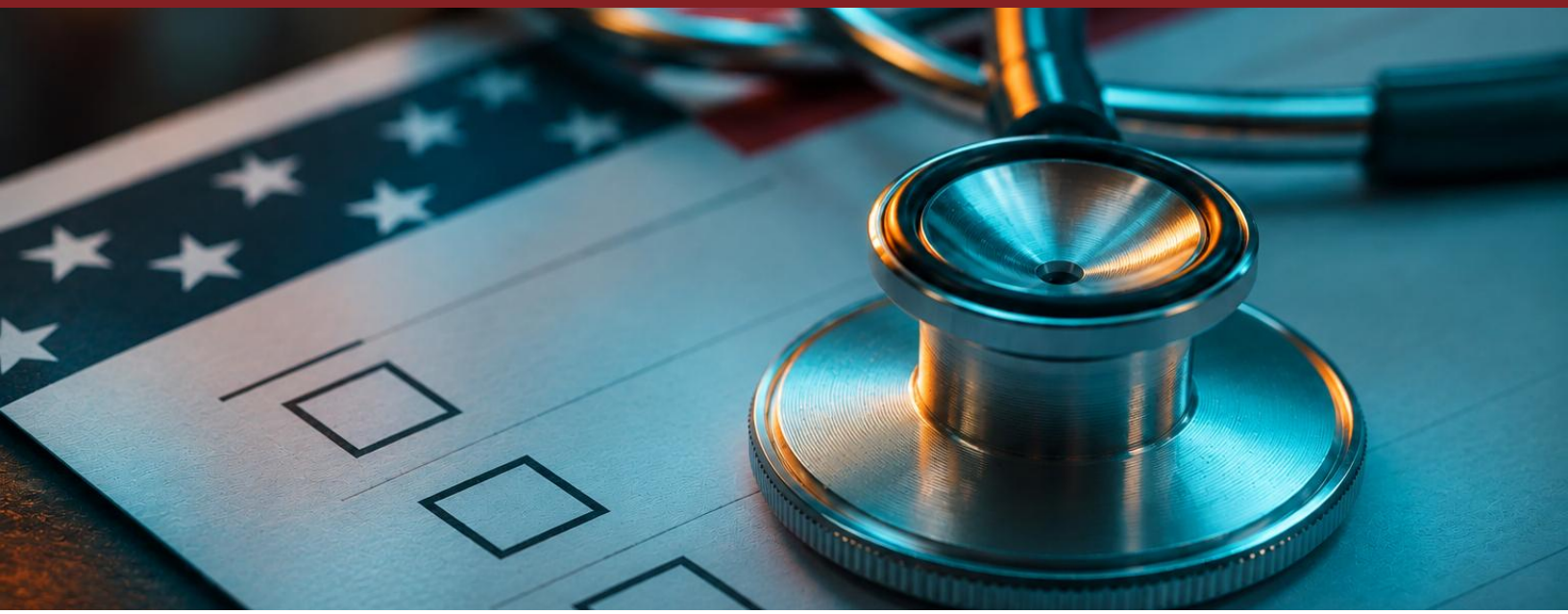
Healthcare Executives Are Cautiously Optimistic After 2026 Midterm Elections

RESEARCH RESULTS



Majority of healthcare leaders expect political relief but 94% brace for One Big Beautiful Bill Act margin hit.

Trish Rivard, CEO, and Adrienne Parkhurst, Corporate Editor
Eliciting Insights, November 2026

After congress passed the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) in July 2025, hospital and health system executives anticipated significant financial disruption. At the time, Eliciting Insights conducted early market research and discovered an industry in triage mode, with leaders predicting layoffs, service line reductions, and extensive rural hospital closures.

Now, after the 2026 midterm elections, we returned to healthcare leadership to see how the political landscape has shifted industry expectations. We surveyed 30 hospital and health system executives—primarily CFOs, CEOs, and CMOs representing large systems—the survey reveals a paradox: **healthcare leaders feel better about the political future, but they are preparing for immediate hits to their operational margins.**

The survey results point to a clear split in how leaders view their future:

- **The Political Relief:** Over half (57%) expect the midterm election results will improve their financial outlook over the next two years.
- **The Operational Reality:** At the same time, almost all the surveyed healthcare leaders (94%) expect the OBBBA to shrink their operating margins over the next 12 months.

© 2026 Eliciting Insights. All Rights Reserved.

HOPE FOR THE LONG RUN, PAIN IN THE SHORT RUN

Following the midterm elections, the majority of healthcare executives feel somewhat better about where federal policy is heading:

- 57% expect the election outcome to improve their financial outlook over the next two years (47% somewhat better, 10% significantly better).

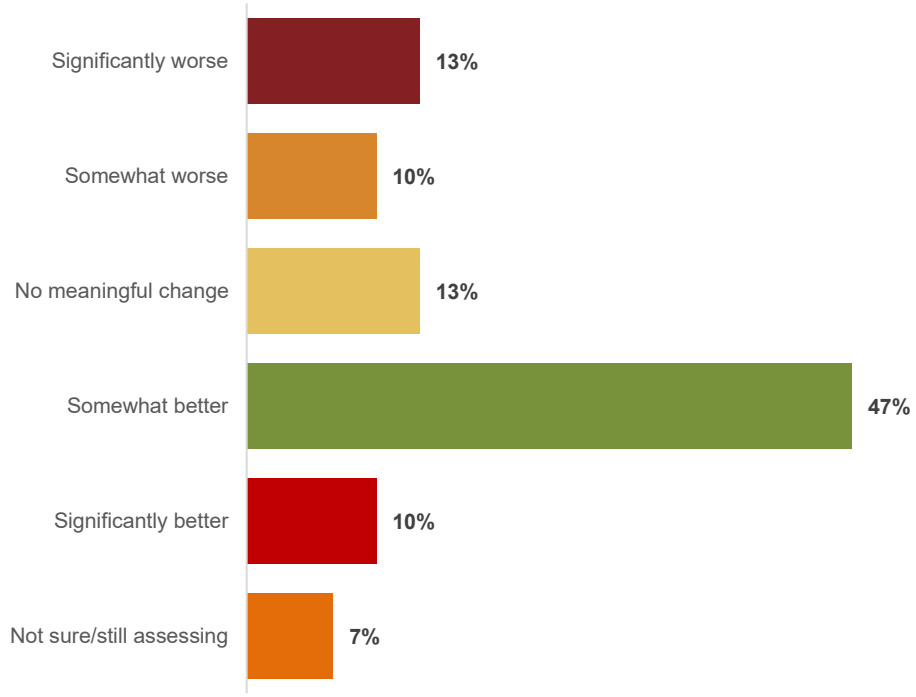
However, some healthcare leaders fear their finances will shrink even more, while others worry Congress won't cooperate to fix the problem.

- 23% believe things will get worse (13% significantly worse, 10% somewhat worse).
- 13% see no real change, and 7% are still waiting to see.

"I feel somewhat optimistic that some of the trillion of dollars of cuts will be restored."

– CEO, Community Hospital, Northeastern Region

Anticipated impact of midterm elections on healthcare system financials



Question: How do you expect the midterm results to affect your organization's financial outlook over the next two years?
Percent of responses from N=30 | Source: Eliciting Insights Survey (November 2026)

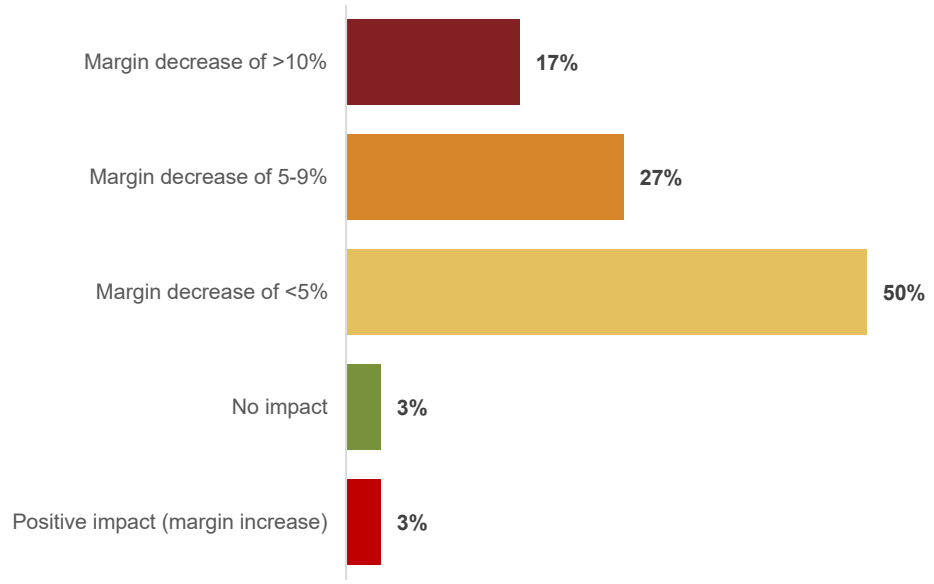
© 2026 Eliciting Insights. All Rights Reserved.

OPERATING MARGINS UNDER THE OBBBA

Over the next 12 months under OBBBA, almost all systems expect financial strain:

- 94% expect their operating margins to drop.
  - 50% expect a drop of less than 5%.
  - 27% expect a drop between 5% and 9%.
  - 17% expect a drop greater than 10%.
- Only 3% foresee no impact, and just 3% anticipate any positive change.

Anticipated margin impact of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act



Question: What overall impact do you expect the OBBBA to have on your health system's operating margin over the next 12 months?
Percent of responses from N=30 | Source: Eliciting Insights Survey (November 2026)



"Hopefully the incoming congressional delegates will prevent any further degradation of the fragile healthcare ecosystem. But, I'm not counting on them to reverse the damage already done."

– CIO, Mid-sized Hospital, Southeastern Region

© 2026 Eliciting Insights. All Rights Reserved.

HEALTHCARE EXECUTIVES ARE CONCERNED ABOUT SEVERAL FEDERAL POLICIES AFTER THE MIDTERM ELECTION–340B AND MEDICARE BASELINE PAYMENTS TOP THE LIST

When asked which federal policy risks their revenue most under the incoming Congress, 27% of healthcare leaders pointed to cuts to the 340B drug pricing program.

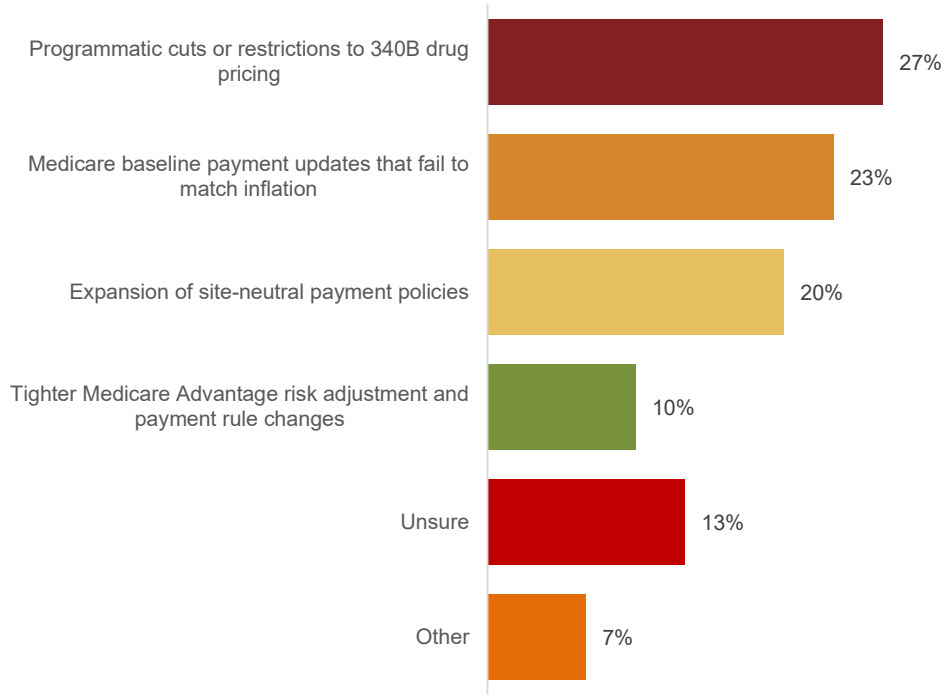
Following closely, 23% named Medicare baseline payments failing to keep pace with inflation as their top financial concern.

In addition to 340B and Medicare payments, CFOs are concerned about site-neutral payment rules for clinic visits (20%) and few highlighted tighter Medicare payment rules (10%) as the most concerning policy issues.

"We were drowning prior to the proposed cuts, I'm not sure we will make it another year."

– Health System CFO

Most concerning federal policy issue



Question: Which federal policy issue do you anticipate poses the greatest downside risk to your net revenue under the incoming Congress?

Percent of responses from N=30 | Source: Eliciting Insights Survey (November 2026)

© 2026 Eliciting Insights. All Rights Reserved.

50% OF SURVEYED LEADERS PLAN TO CHANGE THEIR PHARMACY AND/OR 340B STRATEGIES DUE TO THE ELECTION OUTCOME

With the post-midterm political shift in Washington, healthcare leaders recognize that 340B regulatory changes and payment pressures remain on the horizon. As a result, half of all surveyed executives (50%) are actively altering their pharmacy and/or 340B strategies.

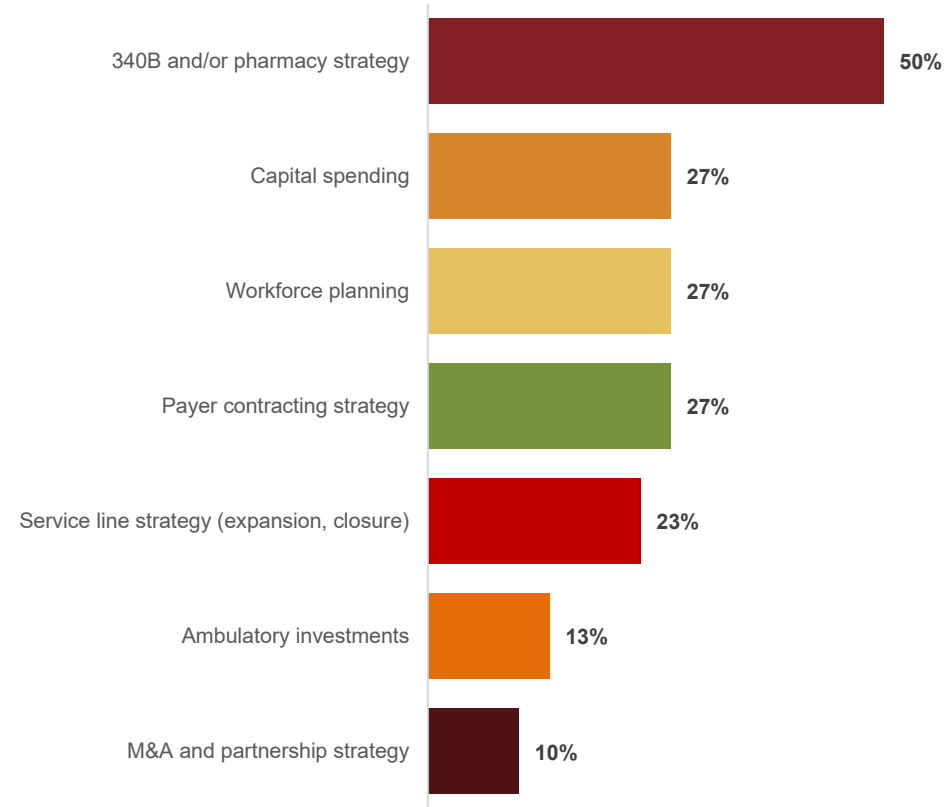
That focus outpaces all other operational priorities by nearly two-to-one.

In addition to pharmacy modifications, CFOs are splitting focus across capital and operational levers: 27% of leaders plan shifts in capital spending, health plan contracting, and workforce management. Fewer executives expect immediate changes to service line offerings (23%), ambulatory footprints (13%), or merger activity (10%).



That focus outpaces all other operational priorities by nearly two-to-one.

Reactions to the outcomes of the 2026 midterm elections



Question: Will the election outcome cause you to change any of the following plans? (Select all that apply.)
Percent of responses from N=30 | Source: Eliciting Insights Survey (November 2026)

© 2026 Eliciting Insights. All Rights Reserved.

HEALTHCARE EXECUTIVES PREFER MONITORING OVER MODELING FOR POTENTIAL 2028 HEALTHCARE REFORMS

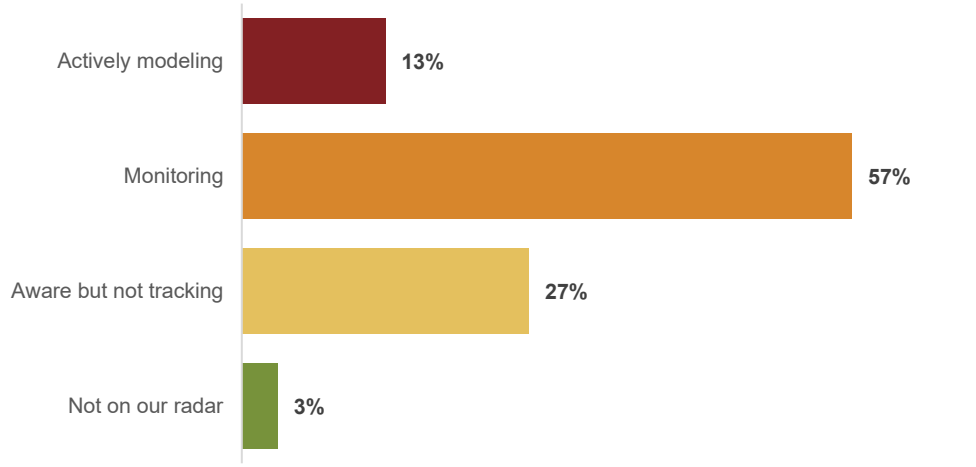
Over half of surveyed executives (57%) are taking a wait-and-see approach to potential 2028 Medicare expansion and public option proposals, while just 13% are actually running the numbers to prepare for them.

- 57% are monitoring public option and Medicare expansion proposals.
- 13% are actively running financial models on them.
- 27% are aware of them but not tracking closely.
- Only 3% say the topic is off their radar.

Altogether, the majority (70%) of health system leaders are keeping an eye on public option proposals, recognizing that today's midterm shift could set the stage for broader changes by 2028.

Altogether, the majority (70%) of health system leaders are keeping an eye on public option proposals, recognizing that today's midterm shift could set the stage for broader changes by 2028.

Tracking Medicare expansion plans ahead of 2028



Question: How seriously is your organization tracking proposals to expand Medicare or create a public option ahead of 2028?
Percent of responses from N=30 | Source: Eliciting Insights Survey (November 2026)

© 2026 Eliciting Insights. All Rights Reserved.

BIGGEST 'BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL' REQUIREMENT CONCERN: SEMI-ANNUAL REDETERMINATIONS AND RETROACTIVE MEDICAID CUTS

When asked which upcoming OBBBA changes will create the biggest financial disruption for their health system, hospital leaders ranked Medicaid enrollment renewals and retrocoverage rules as top concerns:

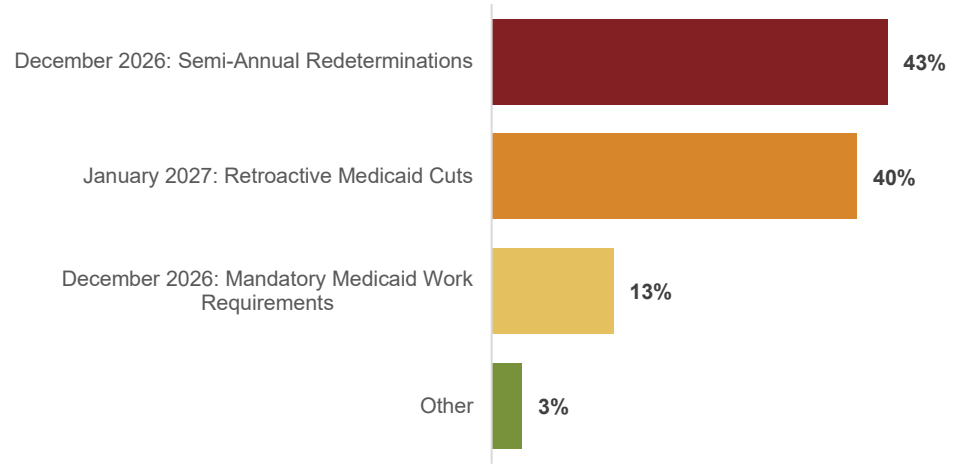
1. 6-month Medicaid renewals (starting Dec 2026): **43%**
2. Shortening retroactive Medicaid coverage to 30 days (starting Jan 2027): **40%**
3. Mandatory Medicaid work rules (starting Dec 2026): **13%**

HOW TIGHTER RULES COMBINE TO REDUCE COVERAGE AND PAYMENTS

Healthcare executives recognize that work requirements, shorter renewal windows, and reduced retrocoverage create a dual threat. Combined, tighter renewal timelines and work rules make it significantly harder for eligible patients to gain and keep coverage, while shrinking retroactive coverage directly reduces hospital reimbursements for care already provided.

When coverage gaps occur—whether from paperwork errors, eligibility hurdles, or reduced back-coverage—hospitals are left absorbing the full cost of that care.

Most impactful One Big Beautiful Bill Act requirement



Question: Which upcoming requirement under the OBBBA will cause the most change for your organization?
Percent of responses from N=30 | Source: Eliciting Insights Survey (November 2026)



When coverage gaps occur—whether from paperwork errors, eligibility hurdles, or reduced back-coverage—hospitals are left absorbing the full cost of that care.

© 2026 Eliciting Insights. All Rights Reserved.

‘BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL’ ANTICIPATED IMPACT: PATIENT CARE

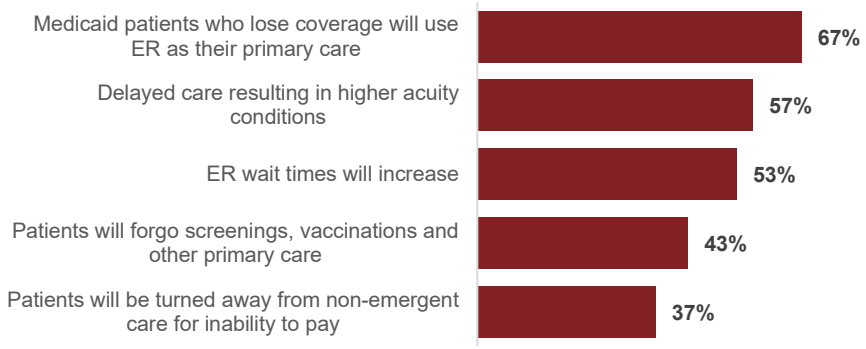
Executives remain deeply concerned about how coverage disruptions and tighter budgets will affect community care.

While these anxieties peaked in 2025, they remain high in 2026 even as percentages have shifted downward.

The proportion of leaders expecting former Medicaid patients to use the ER for primary care dropped from 81% to 67%, while concerns over delayed care fell from 78% to 57%, and fears of longer overall ER wait times decreased from 66% to 53%.

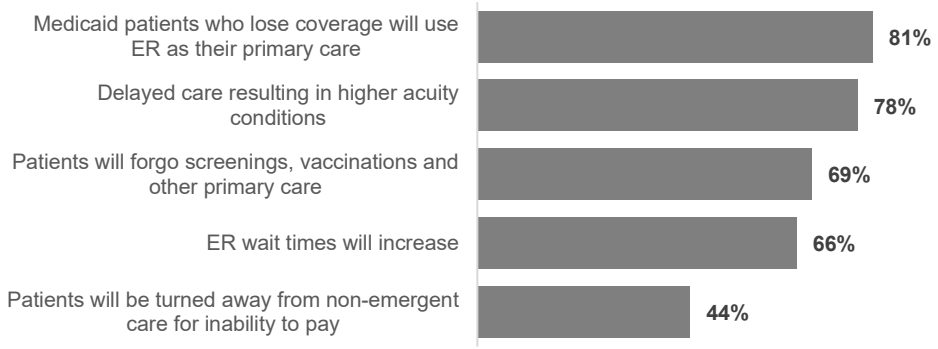
While these anxieties peaked in 2025, they remain high in 2026 even as percentages have shifted downward.

Top 5 patient care impacts anticipated in 2026



Question: Which of the following patient care impacts do you anticipate as a result of OBBBA? (Select top 3 choices.)
Percent of responses from N=30 | Source: Eliciting Insights Survey (November 2026)

Top 5 patient care impacts anticipated in 2025



Question: Which of the following patient care impacts do you anticipate as a result of OBBBA? (Select top 3 choices.)
Percent of responses from N=32 (2025) | Source: Eliciting Insights Survey (July 2025)

© 2026 Eliciting Insights. All Rights Reserved.

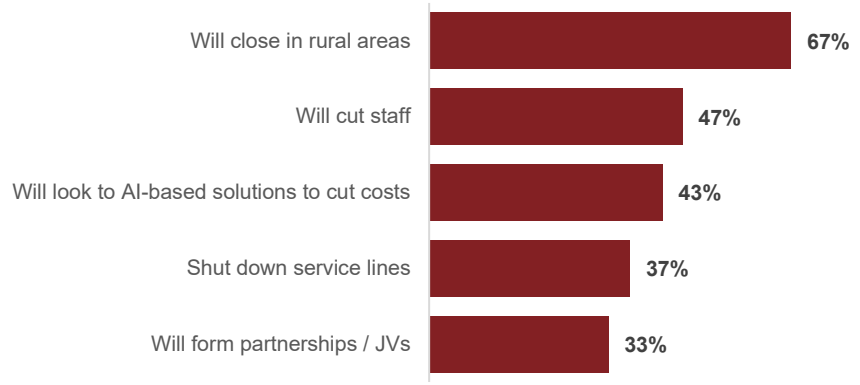
‘BIG BEAUTIFUL BILL’ ANTICIPATED IMPACT: HEALTH SYSTEMS

When the OBBBA passed in July 2025, hospital leaders anticipated severe operational fallout, with widespread fears of rural hospital closures (69%), staff cuts (66%), and reduced service lines (59%).

Today, those concerns remain high, even as overall pressure has softened slightly.

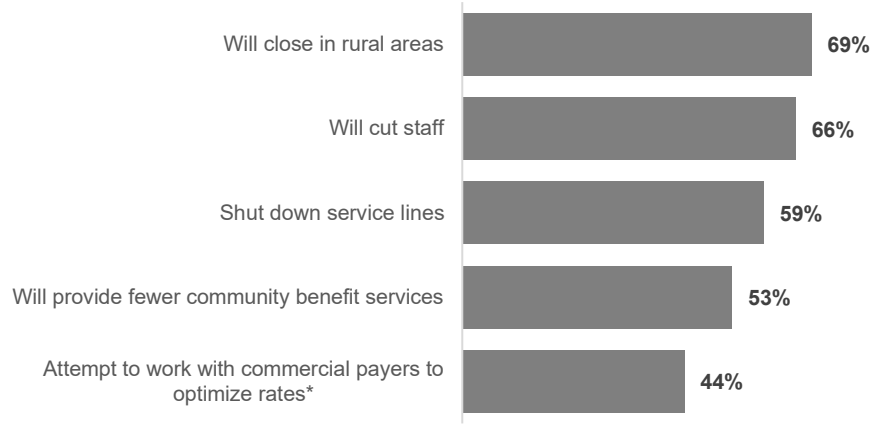
Rural closures stay top-of-mind for 67% of executives, while nearly half (47%) still plan to cut jobs. To manage these ongoing budget pressures, 43% of health systems are now turning to AI solutions alongside traditional service and staffing cuts.

Top 5 health system impacts anticipated in 2026



Question: Which of the following do you anticipate as a result of OBBBA? (Select top 3 choices.)
Percent of responses from N=30 | Source: Eliciting Insights Survey (November 2026)

Top 5 health system impacts anticipated in 2025



Question: Which of the following do you anticipate as a result of OBBBA? (Select top 3 choices.)
*Increase rates/prevent rate reductions
Percent of responses from N=32 (2025) | Source: Eliciting Insights Survey (July 2025)



“My rural hospital is living this right now. We are converting to critical access and de-licensing beds in order to increase our reimbursement amounts just to try to make ends meet.”

– CIO, Rural Hospital

© 2026 Eliciting Insights. All Rights Reserved.

CONCLUSION

While health system leaders feel a bit more hopeful after the midterms, they are bracing for dual financial hits—expecting margin pressure from both the OBBBA and impending 340B drug program cuts. Instead of relying on job cuts, executives are turning to AI, strategic partnerships, and updated pharmacy strategies to protect their bottom line, keep care open to patients, and prepare for bigger policy changes ahead.



Instead of relying on job cuts, executives are turning to AI, strategic partnerships, and updated pharmacy strategies to protect their bottom line.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

From November 6-10, 2026, Eliciting Insights surveyed 30 U.S. healthcare executives on their views regarding how the midterm elections might impact healthcare. Comparisons to 2025 are based on an Eliciting Insights survey of 32 executives fielded in July 2025.

ABOUT ELICITING INSIGHTS

Founded in 2015, Eliciting Insights is a healthcare strategy and go-to-market research firm specializing in HCIT, digital health, and revenue cycle management. Through its proprietary panel of healthcare executives, the firm delivers market intelligence that powers strategic decision-making.

Eliciting Insights helps CEOs and investors navigate M&A and portfolio optimization; enables product leaders to build high-revenue, budget-conscious roadmaps; and empowers marketing and sales leaders to deepen their understanding of personas, buyer journeys and group decision-making dynamics. Learn more at www.elicitinginsights.com.

Findings may be quoted or referenced with attribution to Eliciting Insights. Suggested citation: “Healthcare Executives Are Cautiously Optimistic After 2026 Midterm Elections,” Eliciting Insights, November 2026, https://elicitinginsights.com/2026-midterms-health-system-executive-survey/

Want to learn how Eliciting Insights can help bring your company go-to-market insights like these? Contact us via **info@elicitinginsights.com** to get started.

Follow us on LinkedIn: linkedin.com/company/eliciting-insights

Visit our website: ElicitingInsights.com

© 2026 Eliciting Insights. All Rights Reserved.