

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Monday, January 11, 2021

The following information comes from directly from news sources including Bloomberg Government, Kaiser Health News, and other news sources.

Schedules: White House and Congress

WHITE HOUSE

- Trump has no scheduled public events
- 2pm: Pence leads White House Coronavirus Task Force meeting

CONGRESS

- 11am: House meets for pro forma session
- Pelosi told lawmakers to be prepared to return to Washington as Democrats initiate a response to Trump’s role in encouraging rioters to attack the U.S. Capitol last week
 - House Democratic leaders will request unanimous consent Monday for a resolution urging Pence to invoke the 25th Amendment
 - If lawmakers object to the resolution, it will go to the floor for a roll call vote on Tuesday and after its expected passage, Pence will be given 24 hours
 - If Pence doesn’t take up the request, the House will move to bringing impeachment legislation to the floor, Pelosi says
- Group of House Democrats plans to unveil during pro forma session today an Article of Impeachment accusing Trump of “Incitement of Insurrection”
- 2pm: Pelosi’s leadership team will hold a call with House Democrats to discuss the path ahead
- Senate next convenes for pro forma session on Tuesday, Jan. 12, and for business on Jan. 19

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **The Washington Post: Biden Plans To Release Nearly All Available Vaccine Doses To Speed Inoculations:** A Biden transition official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to reveal greater detail than the public statement, said the Biden team has “faith in our manufacturers that they can produce enough vaccines to ensure people can get their second dose in a timely manner.” In addition, the official said, the incoming administration will, if necessary, make greater use of the Defense Production Act, a law that gives the government powers to step up manufacturing during wars and other emergencies.
- **Bloomberg Government: Biden’s Stimulus Plans Set Up Fresh Fight:** Joe Biden’s plan to pass a multi-trillion dollar economic stimulus package early in his administration faces challenges in a closely divided U.S. Senate, with a potential impeachment trial for Trump that could add to delays. Biden is set to release his proposals -- the price tag for which has yet to be unveiled -- on Thursday. The package will feature a range of support for state and local authorities long blocked by Republicans, a bump in direct payments to \$2,000 and expanded unemployment benefits, along with funding for vaccine distribution, school re-opening, tax credits, rental relief and aid to small businesses.

- Sen. Schumer is set to be majority leader with the barest possible control of the chamber -- a 50-50 split. Deficit-hawk Democrats from conservative states, such as West Virginia's Joe Manchin and Montana's Jon Tester, will have equal influence with leftist progressive Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.).
- **FierceHealthcare: HHS Finalizes Rule That Mandates Exhaustive Review Of Older Regulations:** The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has finalized a rule that requires the agency to review all of its existing regulations and sunset any that don't meet certain criteria. The final rule, released Friday, is a regulatory overhaul that could impact rules across the healthcare industry. Since proposing the rule in November, HHS made several changes intended to make it easier for the public to determine when a rule is under review and to comment on it. "I do believe that by doing this it will be the boldest and most significant regulatory reform ever undertaken, for sure by HHS and also by the federal government," said Brian Harrison, HHS chief of staff, in an exclusive interview with Fierce Healthcare.
- **Stat: Tennessee To Become First State To Run A Closed Medicaid Drug Formulary:** In a first-of-its-kind move, the Trump administration will allow Tennessee officials to restrict medicines covered by the state Medicaid program, which is currently required to provide coverage for all treatments. As part of an effort to overhaul spending by the state program, Tennessee will be permitted to maintain a so-called closed formulary, which is the same approach to coverage taken by private health plans.
- **Bloomberg Government: Divided Senate Looks to Bush Era Power-Sharing:** Senate leadership may look to a power-sharing agreement forged two decades ago as they begin negotiations over the daily running of the chamber and its committees. Democrats' two victories in Georgia last week mean the Senate will be split 50-50. Soon-to-be majority leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) said that changes in how the Senate is run can't be made until Georgia certifies the wins of Democrats Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff, new senators are sworn in, and Harris presides over the Senate. "But I look forward to sitting down with Leader McConnell," Schumer told reporters.
 - Members of both parties said a starting point is likely to be the agreement used by the parties in 2001, when they were also at parity and Vice President Dick Cheney provided tie-breaking votes to get Bush administration priorities through.
- **Bloomberg Government: Biden's HHS to Inherit Legal Fights:** Legal battles left over from the prior administration are likely to dictate which health-care policy priorities Biden and his officials must focus on first. Fights are ongoing over the scope of Trump administration rules that scaled back Obamacare's anti-discrimination protections, gave health-care workers the right to refuse patients' care based on their religious beliefs, and expanded access to skimpier health plans. Court schedules in the cases could force the new administration to make some quick decisions come Jan. 20.
- **Bloomberg Government: Drug Industry at a Crossroads:** In 2020, the pharmaceutical industry raced to develop shots against a deadly new virus sweeping the globe -- and succeeded, in record time. They did it while navigating the pandemic themselves, managing operations and supply chains amid profound disruption. As the J.P. Morgan Healthcare Conference, the sector's biggest annual gathering, kicks off virtually today, drugmakers are set to revel in those accomplishments. But their enthusiasm is bound to be muffled by the prospect of increased regulation and price pressure.

- As the pandemic raged, pharma companies continued to hike prices while their stocks soar. Now that Democrats stand ready to control Congress and the presidency, the industry faces newly empowered critics who don't see them in the rosy light of altruism. "Millions of people in America have been changed by the pandemic, but it's pretty clear the prescription drug corporations have not," said Margarida Jorge, campaign director for the national coalition Lower Drug Prices Now. "Let's get real. These companies would not have jumped into the fight for a vaccine if the federal government hadn't heavily subsidized and funded it."
- **The Hill: White House Task Force Warns Case Surge Could Be Due To New US Virus Variant:** The White House coronavirus task force warned in a report to states this week that a rapid increase in cases this winter could be the result of a domestic variation of the virus, separate from the U.K. variant. "This fall/winter surge has been at nearly twice the rate of rise of cases as the spring and summer surges," the task force wrote in its weekly report, which was obtained by The Hill.
- **The New York Times: Biden Picks Dr. Nunez-Smith To Lead Health Equity Task Force:** Growing up in the United States Virgin Islands, Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith saw firsthand what can happen in a community with limited access to health care. Her father, Moleto "Bishop" Smith Sr., was only in his 40s when he suffered a debilitating stroke that left him partly paralyzed and with slurred speech. ... Now, tapped by President-elect Joseph R. Biden Jr. to lead a new federal task force, Dr. Nunez-Smith, an associate professor of internal medicine, public health and management at Yale University, will address a terrible reality of American medicine: persistent racial and ethnic disparities in access and care, the sort that contributed to her father's disability.