American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Thursday, January 14, 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**

- President Trump has no public events scheduled
- VP Mike Pence attends inauguration security briefing at FEMA HQ

**CONGRESS**

- U.S. House done for the week; Senate convenes Friday for pro forma session, and for business on Jan. 19
- Speaker Nancy Pelosi wants to impose fines of as much as $10,000 on representatives who violate new security screening rules; she says House will vote on rule change mandating the penalties later this month

**Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News**

- **Bloomberg Government: Economic Plan Will Test Republicans:** Biden this evening will unveil a Covid-19 relief package rivaled in size only by last year’s $2 trillion Cares Act, in his first legislative test in the face of a split Senate and a deteriorating economy. Transition officials developed a proposal with Democratic lawmakers and their staff in recent days that’s anticipated at least the $900 billion of December’s bill, with Schumer pressing for more than $1.3 trillion.
  - Biden last week put the “entire package” at “trillions of dollars,” and many Democrats believe it will be as much as $2 trillion, while others expect the coronavirus-only portion will fall closer to $900 billion. That means other spending could take the package to the higher end of the various estimates.

- **Bloomberg Government: New GOP House E&C Members Selected:** The Republican Steering Committee met yesterday to recommend new members for certain committees for the 117th Congress, and eight were selected to join the House Energy and Commerce Committee, according to a Republican aide, Rebecca Kern reports. They include: Reps. Kelly Armstrong (R-N.D.), Dan Crenshaw (R-Texas), John Curtis (R-Utah), Neal Dunn (R-Fla.), John Joyce (R-Pa.), Debbie Lesko (R-Ariz.), Gary Palmer (R-Ala.), and Greg Pence (R-Ind.). The full House Republican Conference still has to approve these appointments.

- **Stat: Biden Aides Retool Pandemic Plans In Light Of New Coronavirus Variants:** President-elect Biden will address growing concerns about new, more transmissible coronavirus variants as he lays out his plans to speed up the sluggish U.S. vaccine rollout in a press conference this week, two of his top Covid-19 advisers confirmed to STAT. Biden was briefed on the variant that first appeared in the United Kingdom, known as B.1.1.7, soon after his Covid-19 advisory board convened an emergency meeting on Christmas Eve to discuss the new strains and the threat they posed.
• **Bloomberg Government: Medicare Bill Returns to Democratic-Led Senate:** The Senate battle over prescription drug pricing will pick up where it left off last year as the chamber undergoes a change in control, a key Democrat said. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), in line to lead the Finance Committee this Congress, said he plans to build off a package of drug pricing measures he and the outgoing chairman, Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), created. He said he still wants to empower the government to negotiate for lower prices, which Grassley has opposed.

• **FierceHealthcare: JPM21: Walgreens Announces Creation Of New Tech Startup Aimed At Developing Comprehensive Patient Platform:** Walgreens is establishing a tech-enabled healthcare startup with the goal of creating a new patient platform that blends physical and digital tools, company leadership said. Executives with the retail pharmacy chain detailed the tech startup, which is expected to launch in the fourth quarter of the company’s fiscal year, during a talk Wednesday during the annual J.P. Morgan healthcare conference. The decision is part of a larger trend in the pharmacy space of retail chains aiming to expand their digital offerings.

• **Bloomberg Government: Sanofi, Eli Lilly Pile on Challenges to HHS’s Drug Discount:** Drugmaker lawsuits are piling up against an HHS advisory opinion that drugmakers must provide steep discounts to pharmacies in contract with low-income health providers. Eli Lilly, Sanofi, and AstraZeneca are asking federal courts to strike down an opinion that calls on drug manufacturers to give contract pharmacies the same discounts they provide to health institutions under the 340B drug pricing program.

• **Bloomberg Government: Democrats ‘Condemn’ Last-Minute HHS Exemption Rule:** A group of top House Democrats including Oversight and Reform Chairwoman Carolyn Maloney (N.Y.) and Energy and Commerce Chairman Frank Pallone (N.J.) yesterday condemned a proposal from the Health and Human Services Department one week before Donald Trump leaves office that seeks to boost health-care providers’ ability on religious grounds to deny services to LGBT people, women or some other minority groups.

• **Bloomberg Government: CDC Mulling International Travel Measures:** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is weighing new measures that could allow for expanded travel after unveiling Covid-19 testing requirements for people flying into the U.S., said Martin Cetron, director of the agency’s division of global migration and quarantine. Lifting travel restrictions on countries such as Brazil and European Union nations is part of ongoing discussions, Cetron said in an interview yesterday. Whether to make allowances in the future for people who have been vaccinated is also under debate, he said. The agency’s discussions are taking place as it works to implement the new rules, which take effect Jan. 26—after Biden takes office.