

## American Nephrology Nurses Association

### Daily Capitol Hill Update - Wednesday, January 15, 2020

(The following information comes from Bloomberg Government Website)

#### Schedules: White House and Congress

##### WHITE HOUSE

- 11:15am: President Trump greets China Vice Premier Liu He in Oval Office
- 11:30am: Trump, Liu participate in signing ceremony of U.S.-China trade agreement
- 12:15pm: Trump, Liu have lunch together
- 2:15pm: Trump meets with Defense Sec. Mark Esper

##### CONGRESS

- 10am: House Speaker Nancy Pelosi holds press conference to announce impeachment managers
  - 5pm: House engrossment ceremony where Pelosi signs articles of impeachment, after which they are transmitted to Senate
  - Senate Republicans say they expect arguments could be begin as soon as Jan. 21
- 3pm: Pelosi holds Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony for Steve Gleason
- Senate meets at 10am; roll call votes possible

#### Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Democrats' Priorities of Elderly:** House Democrats today will unveil an "Older Americans Bill of Rights," a broad set of policy goals meant to showcase the bills they've introduced and passed over the past year. The bill makes big promises, such as expanding Medicare benefits, improving standards for nursing facilities, creating affordable housing and adding protections against age discrimination. Democrats will point to nearly 20 bills that incorporate all these ideas that they have introduced since the start of 2019. The effort aims to highlight the Democratic agenda for older Americans, who typically vote in higher numbers than younger people
- **Less Rigorous Evidence for Drug Approvals:** An ongoing push to speed new medicines to patients has led to the growth of new FDA programs with relaxed evidence standards for approving drugs, according to an analysis by researchers at Harvard Medical School and Brigham and Women's Hospital. The findings, released yesterday, mean patients and their doctors may not fully understand the risks and benefits of taking the latest drugs, especially when the majority of newly approved medications offer "extremely modest benefits" over existing therapies, corresponding author Jonathan J. Darrow said in an interview.

- “There’s nothing inherently wrong with faster approval of drugs. It has to do with the approval of the drugs on the basis of less evidence – or really less certainty,” said Darrow, who’s part of Harvard’s Program on Regulation, Therapeutics, and Law. “We’re talking about an erosion in the amount or quality of the evidence.”
- **Using Opioid Funds for Meth Problems:** Five of the hardest-hit states by the deadly opioid epidemic want Congress to allow them to use federal funding to address the next frontier in substance abuse: methamphetamine and other stimulant drugs. Public health officials for Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and West Virginia told the House Energy and Commerce Committee’s oversight panel yesterday that they want to be able to use funds allocated by opioid laws for cocaine, meth, and alcohol use disorders.
  - More than 68,000 people died of a drug overdose in 2018, a 5.1% drop from the previous year, according to provisional data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. However, use of meth increased from 18.8% in 2011 to 34.2% in 2017 among treatment-seeking opioid users, a study from 2018 found. Researchers are calling stimulant use the next stage of the opioid epidemic, and state health officials said that they’re seeing people move from opioids to meth.
- **Parnas Files:** House investigators yesterday sent phone records and other new evidence obtained from a lawyer for Rudy Giuliani’s associate Lev Parnas to the Judiciary Committee as potential additional material for the Senate trial against Trump. The evidence, obtained by the House Intelligence Committee, includes notes, emails and text messages contained on two flash drives, one in a sealed envelope marked “sensitive,” and the other with information “pertinent” to the impeachment inquiry, Chairman Adam Schiff (D-Calif.) said in a letter to the House Judiciary Committee.
  - The documents include a series of text messages between Parnas and a man named Robert F. Hyde about Marie Yovanovitch, then the U.S. ambassador to Ukraine. In several messages, Hyde suggested that someone had Yovanovitch under surveillance near Kyiv.
  - A lawyer for Yovanovitch yesterday called for an investigation. “Needless to say, the notion that American citizens and others were monitoring Ambassador Yovanovitch’s movements for unknown purposes is disturbing,” the lawyer, Lawrence Robbins, said last night. “We trust that the appropriate authorities will conduct an investigation to determine what happened.”
- **Trump Tax Fight Put on Hold:** In a separate legal fight involving the president, a judge put House Democrats’ lawsuit seeking Trump’s federal tax returns on hold, telling attorneys for both sides he’s awaiting a U.S. appeals court ruling on whether lawmakers can make ex-White House counsel Don McGahn testify. U.S. District Judge Trevor McFadden in Washington issued the ruling yesterday after a telephone conference with the attorneys. He revealed his decision in a single-sentence docket entry without elaborating on his reasoning.

- **War Policy Dominates Democratic Debate:** The top Democratic presidential candidates used the final debate before the Iowa caucuses to make their case to be commander-in-chief less than two weeks after Trump took the biggest foreign-policy risk of his presidency by killing a top Iranian general. The six contenders argued for a reduced U.S. role in the Middle East after two decades in Iraq, and also Afghanistan -- a point Pete Buttigieg brought home by remembering fellow soldiers who were too young to remember Congress's decision to go to war in 2002.

  - Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) went after former Vice President Joe Biden for his support of the Iraq war, which Sanders called one of the "two great foreign policy disasters of our lifetimes." The other, he said, was the Vietnam War. Both conflicts, he added, "were based on lies." Biden said he's long acknowledged that his Iraq war vote was a "big, big mistake" but worked hard as vice president to get U.S. forces out of war zones.
  - Also, Sanders and Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) tried unsuccessfully to calm the waters after a spat involving elitism, sexism and insinuations of lying, in a wide-ranging debate where the top candidates each enjoyed strong moments without yielding a clear winner.
  - The clash between the progressives looms over a tight race 20 days before the Iowa caucuses after a recent Des Moines Register/CNN survey showed Sanders, Warren, Biden and Pete Buttigieg bunched up in a five-point spread at the front of the field. It was hard to see how anyone on stage at Drake University in Des Moines dramatically bettered their position heading into the Feb. 3 Iowa caucuses. That's good news for Sanders, who led one key Iowa poll, and Biden, who topped a second survey. Warren and Buttigieg, struggling to gain altitude in Iowa, held their own with crisp performances while taking some hits from rivals.
  - When moderators raised the Sanders-Warren dispute, the uncomfortable smiles from the two candidates captured the feelings of many progressives who want the two to work together to block a moderate like Biden from winning the nomination. But both held to their contradictory stories about what happened in a private 2018 meeting between them.
  - Overall, the discussion largely focused on policy questions such as foreign affairs, health care, drug prices or universal child care.
  
- **Bloomberg Says He's Investing to Beat Trump:** Michael Bloomberg said the "couple hundred million dollars" he's spent so far in his bid for the Democratic presidential nomination are an investment in preventing Trump from being re-elected in November, regardless of whether Bloomberg becomes the nominee. "That's my investment in trying to get rid of Donald Trump and get us a decent president," Bloomberg said last night in a live appearance on CBS's "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert."
  
- **Senate Readies War Powers Vote:** The Senate is moving closer to a rebuke of Trump over Iran, as Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.) said he has enough Republican votes to pass a resolution limiting the president's ability to carry out a military attack against that country without congressional authorization. The move reflects bipartisan dissatisfaction over the administration's varying justifications for the drone strike that

killed Iranian General Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad, including a briefing last week that one GOP senator called insulting.

- Kaine said the resolution is eligible for floor consideration next Tuesday though it could get a vote earlier if a deal is reached with leadership. Kaine said that under Senate rules the measure can get an expedited vote and only needs a simple majority to pass.
  - Meanwhile, a group of Senate Democrats are requesting a briefing from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence about claims by Trump and other administration officials that Soleimani was planning imminent attacks against American embassies before being killed this month. The senators wrote in a letter that the issue of the U.S. embassy attacks was not shared during an all senators briefing last week from Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, CIA Director Gina Haspel, Defense Secretary Mark Esper and Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Mark Milley.
- **Expanding DEA Fentanyl Powers:** Senate Republican leaders, pushing to place fentanyl-like substances permanently on a list of the most-strictly controlled drugs, have faced opposition by members of both parties fearful of the consequences. The Department of Justice has been pressuring senators to make permanent a temporary Drug Enforcement Administration order that has allowed the federal government to classify all new fentanyl-like substances as the most dangerous and stringently regulated Schedule I drugs before the agency's authority expires in early February, according to two Senate aides.
    - Majority Leader McConnell placed a bill by Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) on the Senate calendar that would make fentanyl-related substances a Schedule I drug. No vote has yet been scheduled, according to a McConnell aide. Trump's impeachment trial in the Senate could delay action past the February expiration.
  - **CBD as Dietary Supplement Weighed:** Democrats and Republicans are uniting to promote hemp-derived CBD in a new House bill that would pave the way for the substance to be marketed as a dietary supplement instead of a drug. House Agriculture Chairman Collin Peterson (D-Minn.) sponsored the bill and found support from lawmakers on both sides of the aisle. "I think I'm the only member of Congress that said in a committee hearing that I take CBD oil," Rep. James Comer (R-Ky.), a co-sponsor, said in an interview.
  - **Child Migrant Deaths:** Internal watchdog investigations into the deaths of two child migrants in government care have not been sufficient in addressing what the Department of Homeland Security needs to do to prevent such deaths, House Homeland Security Committee Chairman Bennie Thompson (D-Miss.) said in an interview yesterday, adding that he wants the department's investigator general to testify to the committee. That office declined to appear at a hearing yesterday, but the committee will continue to pressure the watchdog as it probes its third investigation into a death that occurred last May, Thompson said. Six deaths of child migrants occurred in

about the last 18 months, the first such deaths in a decade. The office last month said two of those deaths showed no evidence of misconduct by DHS staff.

- **Trump Set to Sign 'Beautiful Monster' Trade Deal With China:** Trump is poised to sign a deal with China today that leaves significant tariffs in place and for the first time would punish Beijing if it fails to deliver on pledges related to its currency, intellectual property and the trade balance. But the question set to dog Trump the moment the ink dries is whether the pact will rewire the relationship between the world's biggest economies. For many in Washington, U.S.-China economic ties have become an example of the evils of globalization, the tensions of 21st century technology and geopolitics, and the missteps of past presidents.
  - The "phase one" deal that Trump recently called a "big, beautiful monster" is by no means a standard trade agreement: At 86 pages, it's thinner than most on substance and commitments. The U.S. agreed to halve 15% duties on \$120 billion of imports and delay others in return for Chinese promises to make structural reforms and purchase an additional \$200 billion in American goods and services over the next two years. The full text will be released today.
- **Trump Demands Apple Unlock Terrorist Phones:** Trump called for Apple to "step up to the plate" and suggested the company unlock iPhones used by the terrorist behind the Dec. 6 attack on a Florida Navy base. In a tweet yesterday, Trump said the U.S. government helps Apple on trade and other issues, so in return, the Cupertino, Calif.-based technology giant should unlock the phones used by "criminal elements." Apple has refused to build a backdoor to unlock the iPhone 5 and iPhone 7 belonging to the Florida shooter, but it has said it's offered the government lots of information from cloud-based backups of the devices.
- **Trump Executions Get D.C. Circuit Look:** The Trump administration's quest to resume federal executions faces its latest hurdle today when an appellate panel hears arguments in a case that was at the U.S. Supreme Court previously and soon may be headed back there. Though the broader political themes that accompany capital punishment lurk in the background of the dispute, the three judge panel at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit is tasked with looking at a narrower issue: essentially whether any difference between the words "method" and "manner" is enough to derail several executions for now.
- **Trump's California Fracking Plan Targeted in Suit:** The Trump administration violated federal law by green lighting fracking and oil drilling on more than one million acres of public land in California without taking a hard look at the environmental impacts, a coalition of environmental organizations told the Central District of California yesterday. The groups are challenging the final supplemental environmental impact statement adopted by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management on Dec. 12, 2019.

- **Flynn Seeks to Withdraw Guilty Plea:** Trump's former national security adviser Michael Flynn asked to withdraw his guilty plea to lying to federal agents, two weeks before he was scheduled to be sentenced, in a further deterioration of his relations with the U.S. Justice Department. Flynn said he's making the move because of the "government's bad faith, vindictiveness and breach of the plea agreement." According to Flynn, prosecutors demanded that he admit to knowingly signing a false Foreign Agents Registration Act registration form, which he claims wasn't true. The government also wanted him to testify to this against his former business partner, Bijan Rafiekian, according to his filing yesterday in Washington federal court.