

# American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Friday, January 15, 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
- Next week, Trump plans to depart for Florida before Biden's inauguration and will live at his Mar-a-Lago resort, according to people familiar with the matter

### CONGRESS

- U.S. House done for the week; Senate convenes Friday for pro forma session, and for business on Jan. 19
- Senate Intel Committee postponed a scheduled nomination hearing for Biden's DNI pick Avril Haines

## Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Biden Urges Swift Action on Aid Plan:** Biden's \$1.9 trillion economic relief proposal serves as the opening salvo in a legislative battle that could be prolonged by the go-big price tag and the inclusion of initiatives opposed by many Republicans. "It's not hard to see that we're in a once-in-several-generations economic crisis," Biden said last night in unveiling his plan. "We have to act and we have to act now."
  - The package has elements that would likely appeal to enough moderate Republicans to gain favor in the Senate -- including a \$400 billion effort to contain the coronavirus and speed the economy's reopening, as well as \$1,400 in additional direct stimulus payments. Other parts are set to spur partisan warfare, including Biden's proposals to more than double the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour, provide large-scale aid for state governments and offer higher unemployment benefits through September.
  - K-12 schools would get \$130 billion to speed reopening amid the coronavirus pandemic in the relief package.
  - Federal cybersecurity would get \$9 billion in new funding for programs at the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency and the General Services Administration, as federal agencies are reeling from the massive cyber intrusion of SolarWinds.
- **Bloomberg Government: Rule Allows States to Exit ACA, but Biden May Nix It:** States would be able to largely bypass the federal Obamacare exchange under a rule finalized yesterday by Trump's administration. The last-minute rule is aimed at interjecting more free market competition into the Affordable Care Act marketplaces by allowing web brokers and health insurers to directly enroll people in health plans. But it's unclear whether the rule will actually take effect. Congress and the Biden administration could undo any recent regulation adopted by Trump under the Congressional Review Act.

- Modern Healthcare: CMS Finalizes Rule To Revamp ACA Exchanges:** CMS on Thursday significantly changed how Affordable Care Act exchanges will run, including allowing states to waive some requirements and to use web-based brokers to sell insurance by 2023, moves that insurers and other industry groups have said would essentially privatize the exchanges. In its annual benefit and payment parameters rule, the agency said states will be able to use Section 1332 waivers to individualize their exchanges and eliminate some statutory requirements. States will be allowed to add web-based brokers as the primary way that residents enroll in individual market plans. The agency put the onus on states to ensure those brokers and insurers meet any eligibility requirements.
- Bloomberg Government: HHS Cracks Down on Disability Bias in Pandemic, Disasters:** Doctors and other health-care providers can no longer prioritize patients without disabilities during emergencies like Covid-19 in two states and the Indian Health Service, the HHS said yesterday. The Department of Health and Human Services' Office for Civil Rights has made ensuring equitable care for disabled patients during the Covid-19 pandemic a priority. Four resolutions focus on how care is provided when resources are scarce during a disaster, known as crisis standards of care. Many hospitals are using those standards now because they have too many Covid-19 patients and not enough resources for all of them.
- Modern Healthcare: MedPAC Votes To Boost Hospital Payments, Freeze Or Cut Other Providers:** The Medicare Payment Advisory Commission on Thursday voted to recommend that Congress increase Medicare payments to acute-care and long-term care hospitals by 2% and keep physician payments the same for 2022. The panel will also recommend eliminating scheduled updates to Medicare base payment rates for ambulatory surgical centers, outpatient dialysis centers, hospices and skilled nursing facilities. MedPAC plans to recommend Congress lower Medicare payments for home health agencies and inpatient rehabilitation facilities by 5%.
- Bloomberg Government: Slim Medicare Payment Increase Recommended for Hospitals:** Hospitals would see a 2% increase in their Medicare base payment rates in 2022, but physicians and other clinicians would see no payment increases under final recommendations to Congress approved yesterday by the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission.
- The Hill: Gottlieb: Johnson & Johnson Vaccine Looks Like Promising 'Third Entrant':** Former Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Commissioner Scott Gottlieb said that the new single-dose coronavirus vaccine from Johnson & Johnson "looks like a good profile for a vaccine." "All in all this looks like a good profile for a vaccine," Gottlieb said on CNBC's "Squawk Box" on Thursday after early data showed promising results for the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. "It's an indication we are probably going to have a third entrant here."
- Stat: Medicare Part D Spent Twice What The VA Paid For The Same Drugs:** Medicare Part D spent more than twice as much on hundreds of prescription drugs than the Department of Veterans Affairs in 2017, largely because the agency representing military veterans was able to negotiate prices directly with drug makers, according to a new report.