

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Thursday, January 2, 2020

(The following information comes from Bloomberg Government Website)

Schedules: White House and Congress

WHITE HOUSE

- No public events scheduled

CONGRESS

- House, Senate have departed for the year

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Collins Open to Witnesses at Trial:** Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) said she's open to calling additional witnesses for the Senate trial, but stopped short of backing demands from Democrats for testimony to be set before the process begins. Collins is considered a possible swing vote on deciding the rules for the Senate trial when it gets underway. Collins and Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) both have expressed concern about the impartiality of their colleagues, including McConnell's statements that he is coordinating closely with the White House on trial procedures.
- **Iran-Backed Iraq Militia Withdraws After U.S. Embassy Attack:** An Iran-backed Iraqi militia broke up its encampment outside the U.S. embassy in Baghdad, a move that could ease tensions between Tehran and Washington that escalated after fighters attacked the compound. The Popular Mobilization Units had called on the fighters and their supporters to leave the area yesterday, "out of respect for the decision of the Iraqi government that ordered this and to preserve the stature of the state." The last protesters were gone by late afternoon and moved their tent camp across the Tigris River to an area facing the embassy, militia members reported.
 - The PMU is the umbrella group to which the Kataieb Hezbollah paramilitary unit belongs. The assault on the embassy Tuesday was precipitated by deadly U.S. airstrikes against Kataieb Hezbollah bases in Iraq and Syria earlier in the week, and carried out by group fighters and their supporters. Trump has blamed the attack on Iran, which denied involvement. Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, warned that his country was ready to strike back "unhesitatingly" against any retaliation from Washington.
 - The Trump administration needs to keep Congress informed before any additional military action is taken, House Intelligence Chairman Adam Schiff (D-Calif.) said Tuesday. Schiff said the administration must ensure any "defensive" tactics taken to protect U.S. personnel "do not escalate an already volatile situation." He added: "The right to self-defense is not a blank check for President Trump to drag the United States into an unauthorized war with Iran."

- Kim Jong Un Gives Up On Trump, Prepares for Sanctions:** Kim Jong Un is giving up on hopes that Trump will lift sanctions anytime soon. Alongside the North Korean leader's latest saber-rattling this week was a stunning admission: Efforts to engage the U.S. had failed. Kim's plan now is to find a way to survive under crushing economic sanctions while building an even stronger nuclear deterrent to force Washington to compromise. "We can never sell our dignity, which we have so far defended as something as valuable as our own lives, in the hope of a brilliant transformation," Kim said, according to excerpts from an unusual seven-hour speech this week to party leaders in Pyongyang. "The DPRK-U.S. standoff, which has lasted for generations, has now been compressed into a clear standoff between self-reliance and sanctions."
- Trump Sets Jan. 15 China Trade-Deal Signing:** Trump said he will sign the first phase of a trade deal with China on Jan. 15, sealing an agreement that sees the Asian nation raising purchases of American farm goods in exchange for lower tariffs on some of its products. "The ceremony will take place at the White House," he said on his Twitter account Tuesday, adding he will be going to Beijing, where talks will begin on the second phase of the deal.

 - The deal, announced Dec. 13, sees the U.S. suspending plans for new tariffs on \$160 billion of Chinese imports including smartphones and toys and reducing some existing levies. China agreed to increase its purchases of American agricultural products and has made new commitments on intellectual property protections, forced technology transfers by U.S. companies and currency practices. The move at least temporarily calms fears of an escalating trade war between the world's two largest economies.
- U.S.-Japan Trade Deal Takes Effect:** A trade deal between the U.S. and Japan that cuts tariffs on some agricultural products and industrial goods took effect yesterday, with little indication the two sides would meet a pledge to soon start a new round of talks broadening the pact. Under the deal, Japan reduced tariffs on beef, pork and additional U.S. agricultural products to the same levels it grants other trading partners in the Trans-Pacific Partnership regional trade agreement. Japan failed to secure its goal of reduced tariffs on the cars and auto parts it exports to America.
- Trump Administration's Ambitious Trade Wish List:** U.S. trade officials, fresh off successes in 2019, are eyeing an ambitious wish list in 2020 that includes extracting more concessions from China and Japan, initiating formal negotiations with the U.K., and prepping for a possible showdown with the EU. U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and his team are also still pushing Congress to approve the new trade deal with Canada and Mexico, while implementing terms hashed out with Japan and China in 2019.
- Mnuchin to Lead U.S. Delegation to Davos:** Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin will lead a presidential delegation to the World Economic Forum Jan. 20-24 in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, according to a White House statement. Delegation members will also include Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross, Secretary of Labor Eugene Scalia, Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao, Lighthizer, and presidential advisers Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner.

- **Roberts Urges Humility as Impeachment, Blockbusters Loom:** Chief Justice John Roberts urged his fellow judges to “promote public confidence in the judiciary” as he and the U.S. Supreme Court are set to weigh in on major political controversies – from LGBT rights, to abortion, to the impeachment of Trump. In his annual year-end report, Roberts called on federal judges to reflect on their “duty to judge without fear or favor, deciding each matter with humility, integrity, and dispatch.”

 - “As the New Year begins, and we turn to the tasks before us, we should each resolve to do our best to maintain the public’s trust that we are faithfully discharging our solemn obligation to equal justice under law,” Roberts wrote in his report that called on judges to continue civic outreach.
 - Roberts also said the U.S. has “come to take democracy for granted,” as he urged his fellow judges to keep educating the public about the workings of the federal government and the Constitution. “We have come to take democracy for granted, and civic education has fallen by the wayside,” Roberts wrote. “In our age, when social media can instantly spread rumor and false information on a grand scale, the public’s need to understand our government, and the protections it provides, is ever more vital.”
- **Lewandowski Won’t Run for Senate:** Trump’s former campaign manager Corey Lewandowski said he won’t run for a U.S. Senate seat in his home state of New Hampshire. Lewandowski had considered entering the Republican primary to challenge two-term Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.), whom GOP leaders considered vulnerable after she narrowly won re-election in 2014. He had received encouragement from Trump, though the president did not outright endorse him. An Emerson College poll conducted in September found that Republican primary voters preferred Lewandowski by a double-digit margin over two declared candidates, retired Army General Don Bolduc and a state legislator, Bill O’Brien. But Lewandowski would enter the race against Shaheen facing a 10-point deficit, the poll found.
- **Warren Assails Lobbying Against Her Health Plan:** Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) assailed the clout in Washington of billionaires and large corporations that have lined up to fight her calls for a wealth tax and Medicare for All. “Many corporate executives and career politicians and billionaires on both sides of the aisle want to keep their influence and their wealth,” the Democratic candidate for president said in a speech in Boston Tuesday. “And they are already deep in the fight to do so.” Warren said that industry interests were lining up to stifle many of the more ambitious initiatives of her campaign, including the swift creation of a government-run health-care system that would cover all Americans and eliminate private insurance -- a proposal also offered by her rival for the party’s nomination, Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.).
- **Buttigieg Says He Raised Almost \$25 Million in Q4:** Pete Buttigieg’s campaign said the presidential candidate raised more than \$24.7 million in the fourth quarter, giving the South Bend, Ind., mayor one of the largest war chests among those fighting for the Democratic nomination. Buttigieg’s money came from 326,000 donors who gave an average of \$33, the campaign said in a statement yesterday. His was the first campaign to release fourth-quarter fundraising totals. Relying on a mix of in-person fundraisers and grassroots contributors, Buttigieg took in more than \$76 million in 2019.

- Meanwhile, Sanders's campaign raised \$34.5 million in the fourth quarter, it said in a statement, likely giving him the largest war chest of any Democratic nominee entering the party's first nominating contests in February. The campaign said today that since February, it had raised more than \$96 million from more than 5 million individual donations. The average contribution was \$18 and almost none of Sanders's donors had reached the \$2,800 federal contribution limit, meaning they could donate again.
- **Bloomberg's Ad Spending Tops \$155 Million:** Michael Bloomberg spent \$155.3 million nationally on political ads in 2019, far outpacing fellow billionaire Tom Steyer and other Democratic presidential candidates gearing up for early caucus and primary contests beginning in February. Bloomberg's presidential campaign has bought \$136.8 million worth of broadcast television time and \$7.7 million on cable, according to data from Advertising Analytics, which tracks political ad spending. He spent an additional \$10.8 million on digital ads.
- **Sun Belt Eyes More Clout In Congress:** Fast-growing Southern and Western states will gain more sway in Congress and in presidential elections in the 2020s at the expense of Northeastern and Midwestern states that are growing more slowly or even losing residents, according to an analysis of Census Bureau population projections.
 - Texas is projected to win three House seats and Florida is expected to gain two seats in the 2020 census and subsequent reapportionment of congressional districts among the states, the political consulting firm Election Data Services said in a report. Arizona, Colorado, Montana, North Carolina and Oregon are projected to gain one seat apiece. Ten states, mostly in the Northeast and Midwest, may lose one seat each: Alabama, California, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and West Virginia.
- **Flavored Vaping Products to Be Temporarily Restricted:** Trump said his administration will soon issue new regulations on flavored vaping products that health experts say have hooked millions of children on tobacco. The FDA sent a new proposal to restrict the products to the White House on Monday. The regulation will require all pre-packaged flavored vaping pods other than tobacco and menthol to be at least temporarily taken off the market, according to a person familiar with the matter.
- **Trump Signs Anti-Robocall Measure:** Trump on Monday signed legislation, the Pallone-Thune TRACED Act, that authorizes the Federal Communications Commission to issue additional civil penalties on illegal robocalls and spoofed calls. It also directs the FCC to require phone companies to offer call authentication technology services to consumers. The House and Senate passed the measure late in 2019.
- **EPA Urged to Redo Risk Analysis for Mercury Rule:** The EPA's science advisers say the agency should have used updated direct benefits of reducing power plant emissions of mercury and other toxic chemicals in its proposed 2018 rule. In a draft report released Tuesday, the Science Advisory Board said the EPA should carry out a new risk assessment for the purposes of its upcoming rule and any future mercury regulation. That assessment, it said, should focus on the health effects of consuming not just freshwater fish, but all other fish. "This would be useful for both regulating limits on

toxic chemicals as well as providing advice to consumers on fish consumption,” the scientists wrote in their draft report, which they will discuss for further refining during a Jan. 24 teleconference.

- **EPA Advisers Chide Plan to Ease Auto Emissions Rules:** The EPA’s science advisers rebuked the agency over its 2018 proposal to slash automobile fuel efficiency and emission standards, saying tougher rules charted during the Obama administration may have better outcomes than the plan to replace them. Members of the EPA’s Science Advisory Board said there were significant weaknesses in the scientific analysis underpinning the proposed rollback that should be addressed before the rule is finalized, according to a draft report circulated Tuesday.
- **BAE’s \$10 Billion Howitzer Project Improves:** BAE Systems will win U.S. Army approval this month for full-rate production of self-propelled howitzers and ammunition carriers based on improvements in the \$10 billion program after several years of delays over welding defects. “BAE has met all requirements to enter into full-rate production and we anticipate that happening” during January, Sam Tricom, a spokesman for the weapon’s Army program office, said in an email. The company had been assembling the weapons system since October 2013 under a series of low-rate production contracts during which it produced the vehicles late and with numerous welding defects.
- **Exxon Wins U.S. Suit Over \$2 Million Ukraine-Sanctions Fine:** Exxon Mobil won a lawsuit challenging a \$2 million fine levied against it by U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin after the company allegedly violated Ukraine-related sanctions with a series of oil and gas deals in Russia. Exxon wasn’t given sufficient notice that the 2014 contracts with a powerful ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin would violate restrictions put in place after Russia annexed the Crimea region of Ukraine, U.S. District Judge Jane Boyle said in a ruling Tuesday in Dallas.