American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Tuesday, January 26, 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**

- 9:45am: Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris receive the President’s Daily Brief
- Noon: Harris swears in Janet Yellen as treasury secretary
- 2pm: Biden makes remarks about his racial equity priorities and signs executive actions
- 4pm: Harris and Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff receive second dose of Covid vaccine
- 12:30pm: White House briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and Domestic Policy Advisor Susan Rice

**CONGRESS**

- House not in session, will next meet Jan. 28
- Senate meets at 10am
  - At noon will vote on the confirmation of Blinken to be secretary of state
  - At 2:30pm, presiding officer and senators will be sworn in for the impeachment trial of former President Donald Trump

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

- **Bloomberg Government: McConnell Agrees to Power Sharing Pact:** McConnell has backed off from a key demand that had held up a power-sharing agreement after two Democratic senators agreed not to vote to do away with the rule he wanted to preserve -- the filibuster. McConnell had refused to agree to any deal with Schumer to share power in the 50-50 Senate without a pledge that Democrats wouldn’t jettison the filibuster, which allows the minority to block legislation by requiring 60 votes to advance most legislation. Schumer rebuffed the idea of a guarantee. But McConnell said statements from two Democratic senators, Joe Manchin (W-Va.) and Kyrsten Sinema (Ariz.), were enough.

- **The Washington Post: Biden To Tap Nurse As Acting Surgeon General:** The Biden administration has selected nurse Susan Orsega to serve as the nation’s acting surgeon general, said two people with knowledge of her selection who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the announcement. Orsega, a career-commissioned officer in the U.S. Public Health Service corps and a longtime infectious-disease specialist, would be among the first nurses to serve in the role of surgeon general, which is often referred to as “the nation’s doctor.” The announcement of Orsega’s selection could come as soon as Tuesday, one of the people said.

- **Bloomberg Government: Biden ‘Open to Negotiate’ on Stimulus:** Biden said he is open to reshaping his $1.9 trillion Covid-19 relief proposal as the administration seeks a bipartisan deal, though didn’t rule out pursuing a Democrat-only route for passage. “I am open to negotiate,” Biden said at a news conference yesterday. Still, he said “time is of the
The process is just beginning, Biden said one day after White House officials held a call on the stimulus proposal with 16 senators from both sides of the aisle, along with leaders of a group of House centrists. Republicans have rejected the price tag as too big and too soon after last month’s $900 billion bill. Even some Democrats have joined in questions on the basis for the proposed size.

- **Bloomberg Government: Medicaid Expansion Measures Brewing in More States**: Health policy advocates in Florida, Mississippi, and South Dakota are pushing for Medicare expansion at the ballot box as a way to get around Republican opposition in the statehouse. They’re the last states where passing Medicaid expansion by ballot initiative is a possibility under their state constitutions. Six GOP-led states have expanded Medicaid eligibility by ballot initiatives so far: Maine in 2017; Idaho, Nebraska, and Utah in 2018; and Oklahoma and Missouri in 2020.

- **The Hill: Biden White House To Resume COVID-19 Briefings With Health Officials**: The Biden White House announced it will resume regular briefings with public health experts focused on the response to the coronavirus pandemic, reviving an approach that had fizzled out during the Trump administration even as the outbreak worsened. The White House anticipates holding three briefings each week led by public health officials and members of the administration’s COVID-19 response team, press secretary Jen Psaki said Monday. The first of those briefings will take place on Monday, and will "continue regularly for the foreseeable future," she said.

- **Bloomberg Government: DeLauro to Keep HHS Spending Gavel**: House Appropriations Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.) will continue to chair the Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee in the 117th Congress while also holding the gavel of the committee at large, according to a statement. DeLauro also re-named Rep. Sanford Bishop (D-Ga.) as the chairman of the Agriculture-FDA Subcommittee.

- **The Washington Post: Hospitals Drag Feet On New Regulations To Disclose Costs Of Medical Services**: Hospitals are now required to disclose the prices they secretly negotiate with insurers. But many are dragging their feet on the new regulations, which were passed under President Donald Trump and could very well stay in place under President Biden.

- **Bloomberg Government: Biden Expects Vaccines for Anyone by Spring**: Biden says he expects Covid-19 vaccines will be available to anyone in the country by spring, an ambitious target that can only be met with sharp increases in the current pace of inoculations. The U.S. is currently administering about 1.2 million vaccine doses a day, and Biden said yesterday he expects that will soon reach 1.5 million doses.
  - Still, the U.S. faces a steep uphill struggle in gearing up to monitor Covid-19 variants, a key part of watching for the emergence of dangerous mutations that might spread quickly, evade vaccines or kill more infected people. Other countries, such as the U.K., have established robust, nationwide DNA surveillance programs to identify new covid genomes and track the spread of existing ones. But the U.S. has not: It ranks 32nd in the world for the number of sequences completed per 1,000 Covid cases, according to data from GISAID, a global database where researchers share new genomes.