

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Tuesday, January 28, 2020

(The following information comes from Bloomberg Government Website)

Schedules: White House and Congress

WHITE HOUSE

- Noon: President Trump delivers remarks with Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at White House
- 2pm: Trump receives intelligence briefing
- 4:40pm: Trump departs White House en route to New Jersey for campaign rally
- 7pm: Trump holds campaign rally in Wildwood, New Jersey
- 10:30pm: Trump arrives back at White House
- Michael Flynn, former Trump national security adviser who twice pleaded guilty to lying to federal agents about his contacts with a Russian ambassador, will be sentenced today

CONGRESS

- Senate resumes as a court of impeachment at 1pm
 - 10am: Senators will be permitted to submit statements for the record, bills, resolutions, and cosponsor requests
 - President's counsels expected to complete opening presentation during today's session
- 1pm: House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, bipartisan Congressional Delegation that traveled to Poland and Israel to commemorate 75 years since the liberation of Auschwitz holds press conference
- 2pm: House Oversight Committee holds hearing on protecting government whistle-blowers

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Surprise Billing Eyed Next Month:** The House Ways and Means Committee will mark up a surprise medical billing legislation in February, according to Chairman Richard Neal (D-Mass.). Neal said yesterday he spoke with Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) and Energy and Commerce Chairman Frank Pallone (D-N.J.) last week about the legislation to tackle surprise medical bills his panel is putting together. He declined to offer details on how his bill would differ from the package Pallone agreed upon with Senate HELP Chairman Alexander late last year.
 - Congressional leaders were debating whether to put the surprise billing deal struck by Pallone and Alexander into a year-end spending bill last December when Neal asked House Democratic leaders for the opportunity for his panel to weigh in on the issue.

- **Rare Disease Drugs Get Scrutiny:** Drug companies developing medications for extremely rare diseases could lose their longer exclusivity period if they later turn a profit under changes to the drug approval process Congress is set to debate. Congress has been debating ways to lower drug and health-care costs for years, and changes to the Orphan Drug Act are next on the list. To that end, the House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee will debate the Fairness in Orphan Drug Exclusivity Act today.
 - The bill would change the way research and development costs are calculated to stop potentially profitable drugs from getting the extra exclusivity and other financial benefits that come with orphan drug designation. The orphan drug law encourages drug companies to develop treatments for rare diseases. It gives drug companies seven extra years of exclusivity for a product, among other perks, if the drug treats less than 200,000 people.
- **Conservatives Fight Trump on Drug Pricing:** Conservative groups are gearing up for another rare fight with the Trump administration over the president's attempt to tie drug prices in the U.S. to their price tags overseas. Groups like Americans for Tax Reform and FreedomWorks say they're planning to repeat what they did when the administration first introduced its International Price Index proposal late in 2018, bought digital ads and circulated a letter to HHS Secretary Azar lambasting the idea as socialism. "Our opposition hasn't changed," Jason Pye, vice president for legislative affairs for FreedomWorks, said. "The goal is to show there's real opposition to what HHS is trying to do."
- **Rare Disease Drugs Catch Congress' Eye:** Drug companies developing medications for extremely rare diseases could lose their longer exclusivity period if they later turn a profit under changes to the drug approval process Congress is set to debate. Congress has been debating ways to lower drug and health-care costs for years, and changes to the Orphan Drug Act are next on the list. To that end, the House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee will debate the Fairness in Orphan Drug Exclusivity Act tomorrow.
- **Trump Heads to Jersey Shore for Party-Switcher:** Trump is headed to the Jersey Shore today to host a political rally for Jeff Van Drew, the congressman who switched parties to join House Republicans in protest of the impeachment vote. The president's visit to Wildwood is intended to bolster the freshman lawmaker, who won his seat as part of the Democratic wave of 2018 but subsequently declared his "undying support" for the president during an Oval Office meeting. Trump has repeatedly touted Van Drew's defection to argue that the Democratic-led impeachment inquiry is illegitimate, and told the lawmaker he would endorse his re-election bid.
- **Warren's Year of Plans Face Judgment Day:** Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) prides herself on having a plan for everything, yet that isn't translating to a strong showing in the polls a week before the nation's first nominating contest. Throughout the primary campaign, she embraced her wonky image and tried to set herself apart from her Democratic rivals by rolling out dozens of policy plans focusing on voters' biggest concerns. She offered road maps for restructuring the entire American economy, from health care to education to the

tax system. Yet Warren heads into the Iowa caucuses trailing both Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Joe Biden, locked in a close battle for third with Pete Buttigieg.

- **Collins to Challenge Loeffler:** Rep. Doug Collins (R-Ga.) is expected to announce he will challenge Sen. Kelly Loeffler (R-Ga.) for her seat, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported, citing several people familiar. Loeffler was appointed by Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp (R) to fill the seat left vacant by Sen. Johnny Isakson (R), who stepped down in December. Collins and Loeffler will run in a November special election to fill the remainder of the six-year term Isakson won in 2016.
- **Door Still Open for Energy Bills After Impeachment:** Senators immersed in Trump's impeachment trial still hold out hope for several clean energy, conservation, and energy efficiency measures this year, despite floor time lost to the trial and election-year campaigning. McConnell began discussions with committee chairmen last month to ready legislative packages, focusing on bills that have already been reported out of committee and could be moved as soon as the impeachment trial is over. An energy package is among them, according to Senate Republican Conference Chairman John Barrasso (R-Wyo.).
 - More than 70 bills were advanced out of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee in 2019, including measures to boost wind energy and new incentives for battery storage to accommodate more power from clean energy. Chairman Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) plans to narrow those to a list of measures that moved through her panel with solid bipartisan backing to improve their odds of getting on the floor.
- **White House Threatens AUMF Measure Veto:** The Trump administration expressed opposition to war-related measures being considered by the House this week. In two separate Statements of Administration Policy, the White House Office of Management and Budget said H.R. 5543 – which would bar the use of U.S. funds for military action in or against Iran unless Congress declares war or specifically authorizes it – could “undermine the ability of the president to protect American citizens.” The White House also opposes H.R. 2456, which would repeal the 2002 Authorization for the Use of Military Force that allowed military action in Iraq. The House this week will consider the measures as two separate amendments to H.R. 550.
- **False Climate News on YouTube:** House Climate Chairwoman Kathy Castor (D-Fla.) urged Google yesterday to halt “the spread of dangerous climate misinformation” on YouTube. In a letter to chief executive Sundar Pichai, Castor cited a report by online advocacy group Avaaz that YouTube has been driving millions of viewers each day to videos about climate change denial. “I urge you to ensure that YouTube is not incentivizing climate misinformation content on its platform, or effectively giving free advertising to those who seek to protect polluters and their profits at the expense of the American people,” Castor said.

- **Senator Seeks Info on Bezos Hack:** Sen. Bob Menendez (D-N.J.) sent a letter to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo requesting more information on alleged hacking of Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos' phone and the involvement of the Saudi Arabia government. Menendez asked for details on the hack and measures the State Department is taking to protect data, and requested a response by Feb. 5
- **Hong Kong Curbs Travel From China as Virus Deaths Exceed 100:** Governments, companies and international health organizations rushed to contain a SARS-like coronavirus that has claimed more than 100 lives, with Hong Kong the latest to announce travel restrictions on people moving in and out of the mainland. Hong Kong will close some border checkpoints and restrict flights and train services from the mainland, Chief Executive Carrie Lam said today. The Chinese government is also suspending visas for visitors to the territory, she said.
 - As global anxiety over the outbreak grows, World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus visited Beijing to meet with government officials. In a meeting with Foreign Minister Wang Yi, he commended China on the public health measures it has taken. "We can see the speed and scale with which you are really hitting the virus hard," Tedros said. "This is something we appreciate and also respect you for what you are doing."
- **Johnson Walks Huawei Tightrope, Sets Up Clash With Trump:** Three days before Brexit becomes reality after years of infighting, the government in London is trying to reconcile an increasingly truculent U.S. with the demands of the domestic market in the debate over whether Huawei should be involved in upgrading telecom networks. The U.S. has campaigned for a ban on the Chinese giant citing security concerns. Today, Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government is set to allow the company to build fifth-generation wireless networks. Huawei is certain to be banned from core parts of the network after Digital and Culture Secretary Nicky Morgan earlier this month vowed to keep the company out of "critical national infrastructure." The U.K. could also impose stricter rules to limit telecom companies' reliance on any one vendor to curb Huawei's market influence.
- **Pentagon to Test Bombs to Glide at Five Times the Speed of Sound:** The Pentagon plans a "very aggressive" expansion of its hypersonic weapons efforts this year, with at least four initial flight tests of prototypes for glide bombs that can fly five times the speed of sound and maneuver en route, officials said. A new Hypersonics Transition Office that Congress funded this year will also bankroll a university consortium to conduct advanced research into the weapons and develop a workforce for the new technology, the officials said.
- **Fed Officials Subtly Shift Inflation Strategy:** The Federal Reserve won't wrap up a year-long review of its policy framework for months, but some officials are already shifting their approach to hitting the central bank's inflation goal. The number of policy makers forecasting above-target inflation in three years' time jumped to seven in December projections. That looks like a signal they're deliberately aiming to generate price pressures in excess of their 2% objective. There's also been a noticeable change in the way that some

policy hawks, who've typically had less tolerance for inflation, now talk about it -- declaring in recent weeks that they'll be more relaxed about giving inflation time to reach and even exceed the target.

- **IRS Chief Nudges Tax Pros to Get Involved in Agency Overhaul:** IRS Commissioner Charles Rettig has a simple message for tax practitioners: "We want your help." Rettig, during remarks at a tax conference hosted by the USC Gould School of Law in Los Angeles, urged tax pros to consider working with the IRS and to offer advice about what the agency should do in response to the Taxpayer First Act. That 2019 law, intended to improve agency operations and customer service, requires the agency to submit to Congress a plan for a potential reorganization. "Please reach out to us, provide whatever knowledge, experience, assistance you can," Rettig told a packed audience. "Do not sit on the sidelines during this one."