

# American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Thursday, January 28, 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: President Biden, Vice President Harris receive daily briefing
- 1:30pm: Biden signs executive actions on health care
- 2:30pm: Press Secretary Jen Psaki holds briefing

### CONGRESS

- Senate convenes at 10am
  - 1:45pm: Senate plans to hold procedural vote on Alejandro Mayorkas, Biden's nominee to lead Dept. of Homeland Security
- House meets at 9am for pro forma session

## Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Biden Plans to Open Obamacare for Pandemic:** Biden will make it easier for Americans to buy health insurance during the pandemic, reopening the federal Obamacare marketplace with an order today that's a step toward reinvigorating a program his predecessor tried to eliminate. Another directive Biden will issue today will immediately rescind the so-called Mexico City Policy, which prohibits international non-profits from receiving U.S. funding if they provide abortion counseling or referrals.
  - The Obamacare executive order will create a special enrollment period for plans sold in the federal Healthcare.gov market from Feb. 15 to May 15, offering a path to health care for people who've found themselves without insurance coverage after losing their jobs. The order also directs agencies to look for ways to strengthen Medicaid, the federal health program for low-income people, and the Affordable Care Act more broadly.
- **Stat: A Thermostat For Blood Pressure Could Help Patients With Spinal Cord Injuries:** Paralysis or the loss of mobility are among the most pressing and clear consequences of a spinal cord injury. But many patients also face lesser-known complications that can disrupt their daily lives in other ways. One of the most common problems is orthostatic hypotension, or not being able to maintain a stable blood pressure when switching positions between sitting, standing, or lying down.
- **Becker's Hospital Review: Millions Allocated To Vaccine Research Fund Misused For Years, US Special Counsel Says:** The U.S. Office of Special Counsel said millions of dollars in federal HHS funding intended for vaccine research and emergency preparedness were misused for at least a decade, The Hill reported Jan. 27. Congress appropriated the funding to HHS's Office of Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response. The money, meant for that agency's Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, was allegedly spent on administrative expenses, legal services,

unrelated salaries and, in one instance, the removal of office furniture, according to a report from HHS's Office of Inspector General cited by the Hill.

- **Bloomberg Government: Calls for Permanent Paid Leave Increasing:** House Democrats, steeled by the pandemic, are eager to advance permanent paid leave legislation, in tandem with temporary protections the Biden White House is expected to try to push through Congress in the coming weeks. Federal and state Covid-19 legislation provided for or bolstered some paid leave benefits to over 87 million Americans for first time last year, emboldening Democrats who have long sought permanent, job-protected paid family and sick leave legislation. Despite national support for framework legislation, the U.S. remains the only developed nation in the world without some measure of paid family leave for private-sector workers.
- **FierceHealthcare: HHS Moves To Enable Recently Retired Doctors And Nurses To Deliver COVID-19 Vaccine:** The Biden administration is moving to allow doctors and nurses that recently retired or are inactive to administer COVID-19 vaccinations as part of a broader strategy to ramp up vaccinations. The announcement was made Wednesday as part of a White House briefing on the state of the pandemic and efforts to increase the supplies of the vaccine.
- **Bloomberg Government: Biden Calls for Benefits for Refusing Unsafe Work:** Workers who refuse a job they consider unsafe may have an easier time getting unemployment benefits under an earlier Biden administration proposal, but big questions remain around the policy's specifics and how states could apply it. Biden told the Department of Labor to draft guidance to clarify that "workers have a federally guaranteed right to refuse employment that will jeopardize their health" while still qualifying for unemployment benefits.
- **Bloomberg Government: Pentagon Stalls \$900 Million in Malpractice Claims:** Roughly \$900 million worth of medical malpractice claims are languishing at the Pentagon, more than a year after lawmakers eased the seven-decade ban on troops or their families seeking compensation for injury or death at the hand of military hospitals. Lawmakers say they are angry over the department's delays in carrying out a policy for making payments.