

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Friday, January 29, 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

- 9am: Biden, Harris receive president's daily brief
- 11am: Biden, Harris receive briefing from Treasury Secretary Yellen
- 1:45pm: Biden departs White House en route to Walter Reed Medical Center; departs at 4pm
- 10am: Press briefing with Press Sec. Jen Psaki

CONGRESS

- Senate returns Monday to vote on confirmation of Alejandro Mayorkas to be Homeland Security sec.
- House next meets Monday

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Health Equity Task Force to Spotlight Disparities:** Health equity will be in the spotlight as the Biden administration ramps up its Covid-19 response, with multiple public White House briefings a week, including one scheduled today, to give updates on its progress. Advocates say the solutions to societal inequities in health care are a tough challenge. Communities of color, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups have been disproportionately affected by the coronavirus.
- **Democrats Push New Money for Job Training:** Congressional Democrats introduced legislation yesterday that would authorize \$15 billion for purposes like on-the-job training and registered apprenticeships. The Relaunching America's Workforce Act would also send money to adult education providers and community college grant programs. Congress funded those items in the wake of the Great Recession and supporters say it's even more important to fund job training now in response to the pandemic.
 - Lawmakers released a flurry of bills this week on priorities like wages, education, and job training in anticipation of party leaders assembling a reconciliation stimulus package.
- **Modern Healthcare: Biden To Reopen ACA Marketplace, Revisit Work Requirements:** President Joe Biden on Thursday ordered HHS to create a special enrollment period to allow people to sign up for a health plan through Affordable Care Act marketplaces and reexamine policies like Medicaid work requirements that make it more difficult for individuals to access or afford coverage. HHS will allow individuals to enroll in coverage through HealthCare.gov from Feb. 15 to May 15. Ordinarily, signing up for an exchange plan is tightly restricted outside a six-week period late each year.

- **AP: Democrats To 'Act Big' On \$1.9T Aid; GOP Wants Plan Split:** Democrats in Congress and the White House have rejected a Republican pitch to split President Joe Biden's \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 rescue plan into smaller chunks, with lawmakers appearing primed to muscle the sweeping economic and virus aid forward without GOP help. Despite Biden's calls for unity, Democrats said the stubbornly high unemployment numbers and battered U.S. economy leave them unwilling to waste time courting Republican support that might not materialize. They also don't want to curb the size and scope of a package that they say will provide desperately needed money to distribute the vaccine, reopen schools and send cash to American households and businesses.
- **The Hill: Democrats Introduce Measure To Boost Privacy, Security Of Health Data During Pandemic:** A group of Democratic lawmakers in the House and Senate on Thursday introduced legislation intended to increase the privacy and security of personal health data collected in connection to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Public Health Emergency Privacy Act would ensure that health data collected during the pandemic could not be used for anything other than public health efforts, along with addressing a slew of potentially discriminatory practices.
- **Modern Healthcare: Hospitals Face Retroactive Medicare Pay Cuts For Outpatient Exception Denials:** CMS may claw back millions of dollars in payments after the agency denied reimbursement rate cut exemptions for hospitals' off-campus outpatient facilities. CMS rejected more than 60% of the mid-build exceptions, which would preserve hospitals' higher reimbursement rates if they had the documentation to prove their off-campus outpatient departments were being constructed when the Bipartisan Budget Act was passed in 2015.