

# American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Monday, January 4, 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

- 6:10pm: President Donald Trump departs the White House for rally in Dalton, Ga. in support of Republican Senators David Perdue and Kelly Loeffler, who each face a runoff election on Jan. 5
- Vice President Mike Pence departs at 10:45 for 'call to action' event with faith leaders in Milner, Ga.

### CONGRESS

- House convenes at 10am, with procedural votes expected throughout the day, with the first votes are expected as early as 10am
  - Rules for the 117th Congress are pending
- The Senate is out of session, is next scheduled to convene on Jan. 6

## Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Pelosi Elected Speaker With Narrow Majority:** Pelosi was elected House speaker as the new session of Congress began with a narrower Democratic majority, which will present her with multiple challenges in what could be her final two year term in the top post. Pelosi, 80, the only woman to hold the speaker's gavel, was selected again with 216 votes, just two more than a majority of those present, despite a clamor from both the progressive and moderate wings of her party for a new generation of leadership. "Now is a time for our nation to heal," Pelosi said in a speech after the vote. "Our most urgent priority will continue to be defeating the coronavirus," she said, adding that "the pandemic has pulled back the curtain on even worsened disparities in our economy and our society."
- **Bloomberg Government: Surprise Billing Law Poses Key Test for Biden:** Protecting Americans from surprise medical bills without inflating health insurance costs will be a pivotal first-year challenge for the Biden administration, industry observers say. The U.S. government will next year create a sweeping system to stop instances where insured individuals get unexpectedly expensive medical bills and to settle pricing disputes between doctors and insurers via arbitration. President Donald Trump signed the legislation into law as part of the omnibus spending and virus relief package.
- **KHN: Seniors Face Crushing Drug Costs As Congress Stalls On Capping Medicare Out-Of-Pockets:** Sharon Clark is able to get her life-sustaining cancer drug, Pomalyst — priced at more than \$18,000 for a 28-day supply — only because of the generosity of patient assistance foundations. Clark, 57, a former insurance agent who lives in Bixby, Oklahoma, had to stop working in 2015 and go on Social Security disability and Medicare after being diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a blood cancer. Without the foundation grants, mostly

financed by the drugmakers, she couldn't afford the nearly \$1,000 a month it would cost her for the drug, since her Medicare Part D drug plan requires her to pay 5% of the list price. Every year, however, Clark has to find new grants to cover her expensive cancer drug.

- **Modern Healthcare: New Care Model Helps Primary-Care Practices Treat Obesity:** Despite the prevalence of obesity in the U.S. and its contribution to costly chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension, seasoned primary-care physicians often lack the education and resources to adequately address the condition among their patients. A 2017 survey from the medical association AMGA found 68% of its members weren't following any guidelines for obesity care management in their practices. There were several reasons for this, including stigma among health professionals about obesity being a lifestyle choice rather than a chronic condition, said Elizabeth Ciemins, AMGA vice president of research and analytics. Additionally, physicians weren't adequately trained until recently on obesity management and were often uncomfortable broaching the topic with patients. Providers "don't know how to have those conversations," Ciemins said.
- **AP: New Washington Law Sets \$100 Cap On Copayments For Insulin:** Many Washington residents with diabetes will have an easier time affording insulin this year, as a law imposes a \$100 cap on patient copayments. The law applies to any health-care plan issued or renewed after Jan. 1 that covers insulin drugs. It includes language to protect people who have "high deductible" insurance from paying more than \$100 per 30-day supply, the Seattle Times reported.