

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Monday, October 11, 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

- Biden has no public events scheduled. He is slated to return to Washington from Wilmington, Del., arriving at the White House at 4:20 p.m.

CONGRESS:

- House: No events scheduled today
- Senate: No events scheduled today

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Axios: 90% Of Medicare Advantage Enrollees Enrolled In Highest-Quality Plans:** Nine out of 10 Medicare Advantage members are enrolled in plans that earned the government's highest quality marks for 2022, according to new federal data. Health insurers were quick to tout the quality scores in press releases. But the federal government went easy on the grades during the pandemic, and experts have long considered MA's quality system to be "flawed and inconsistent."
- **Bloomberg Government: White House Weighs Push for Crypto Oversight:** The Biden administration is weighing an executive order on cryptocurrencies as part of an effort to set up a government-wide approach to the white-hot asset class, according to people familiar with the matter. The proposed directive would charge federal agencies to study and offer recommendations on relevant areas of crypto – touching on financial regulation, economic innovation and national security, said the people, who asked not to be named discussing plans that are still under consideration.
- **Politico: As Covid Trends Down, Fauci Warns Not To 'Declare Victory':** Covid-19 cases are trending in the "right direction," but people should be careful to not "declare victory," the president's top medical adviser, Anthony Fauci, said Sunday. The seven-day average shows cases below 100,000, hospitalizations below 10,000 and deaths below 2,000, he noted. "If you look at the history of the surges and the diminutions in cases over a period of time, they can bounce back," the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases said on CNN's "State of the Union." Plus, he mentioned there are roughly 68 million people eligible for vaccination who have not gotten it.
- **Modern Healthcare: Some Hospitals Will Opt To Pay Fine For Not Publishing Prices, Lawyers Say:** While most providers say they agree with the intent of the price transparency

law, smaller hospitals are struggling to gather the data and present them in a useful format. Hospitals were required as of Jan. 1 to post machine-readable files of the rates they negotiate with payers, gross charges and discounted cash prices, which the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services hopes will curb higher-than-average prices. CMS recently sent a second round of warning letters to hospitals that haven't disclosed the rates of 300 "shoppable services" in a consumer-friendly form, threatening a maximum yearly fine of more than \$2 million for larger hospitals and almost \$110,000 for those with fewer than 30 beds.

- **The Washington Post: Hundreds Of Thousands Of U.S. Troops Have Not Complied As Pentagon Deadlines Near:** Hundreds of thousands of U.S. service members remain unvaccinated or only partially vaccinated against the coronavirus as the Pentagon's first compliance deadlines near, with lopsided rates across the individual services and a spike in deaths among military reservists illustrating how political division over the shots has seeped into a nonpartisan force with unambiguous orders. Overall, the military's vaccination rate has climbed since August, when Defense Department leaders, acting on a directive from President Biden, informed the nation's 2.1 million troops that immunization would become mandatory, exemptions would be rare and those who refuse would be punished. Yet troops' response has been scattershot, according to data assessed by The Washington Post.
- **Bloomberg: Astra's Antibody Prevents Severe Covid In Boon For Drugmaker:** AstraZeneca Plc's antibody cocktail was effective at preventing people with mild or moderate Covid-19 infection from worsening in a study that bolsters the drugmaker's ambitions for the product. The cocktail halved the risk of developing severe illness or death compared with a placebo in 822 participants who had been symptomatic for a week or less and weren't hospitalized, Astra said in a statement Monday. The results are another boon for the injected product after it was also found to be highly effective at preventing symptomatic disease in high-risk people. The news comes after Merck & Co. fueled optimism that it will soon have the first Covid pill. Both treatments could offer a simple way to treat patients before they ever reach the hospital.
- **Modern Healthcare: Healthcare Employment Plummeted In September:** Healthcare hiring nosedived in September as it declined for the third time this year, according to the latest federal jobs report. Employment in the healthcare sector fell by an estimated 17,500 jobs last month, preliminary data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics show. The decline is the second-biggest this year, overshadowed only by January, when hiring contracted by 80,500 jobs.