American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Wednesday, October 13, 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 at 11:15 a.m. is scheduled to sign legislation that would designate the Sept. 11 National Memorial Trail Route. Biden will meet at 1:45 p.m. with officials and stakeholders to discuss efforts to address the global transportation supply chain.

- He’ll deliver remarks on the topic at 2:20 p.m. Executives from companies including Walmart, UPS and Home Depot plan to participate, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said at a press conference yesterday.

CONGRESS:

- The House is scheduled to hold a hearing titled Beyond I, Robot: Ethics, Artificial Intelligence, and the Digital Age at 12:00 p.m.

- The Senate has nothing scheduled today.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Poll Shows Drug Pricing Negotiation Support**: A new poll from the Kaiser Family Foundation shows Americans of all party affiliations want government to negotiate for better drug prices—an effort being debated in Congress—even after hearing common arguments about it, Alex Ruoff reports. Eighty three percent of the public in the survey said they favored allowing government to negotiate to lower drug prices, including 76% of Republicans. After hearing key arguments being made for and against that plan, “little” change was seen overall, with Republican support overall dipping to 71%.
  - Pharmaceutical lobbying group PhRMA has for months cited an earlier KFF poll that showed support for drug pricing negotiation dropped if people are told about the arguments against it. Although the new poll seemed to rebut this point, the trade group hit back, saying the survey was “misleading” and “contradicts years of its own nonpartisan research.”

- **AP: 'Difficult Decisions' As Biden, Democrats Shrink Plan To $2T**: With the calendar slipping toward a new deadline, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is warning that “difficult decisions must be made” to trim President Joe Biden’s expansive plans for reimagining the nation’s social service programs and tackling climate change. Democrats are laboring to chisel the $3.5 trillion package to about $2 trillion, a still massive proposal that would be paid for with higher taxes on corporations and the wealthy. And with no votes to spare, they must
somehow satisfy the party’s competing moderate and progressive lawmakers needed for any deal.

- **Bloomberg Government: Democrats Eye Medicare Managed-Care Plans**: Medicare managed-care plans say they’ll have to increase premiums and reduce benefit offerings if Democrats cut their program reimbursements to help pay for new dental, vision, and hearing benefits in traditional Medicare. As Democrats work to trim their reconciliation package, recent research suggests that tweaking some of the Medicare Advantage payment formulas could save billions of dollars in overpayments that could help pay for the proposed benefit expansion.

- **Bloomberg Government: Nominations**: Biden yesterday announced his intent to nominate Lily Griego to be regional director of Region 8 at the Department of Health and Human Services, according to a press release.

- **Bloomberg Government: Physicians Press Lawmakers on Medicare Payment Cuts**: Physician groups yesterday called for congressional action by year’s end to stop a series of potential Medicare payment cuts from taking effect in 2022. Medical providers had hoped to attach legislative fixes for the proposed cuts to the massive reconciliation package that Democrats are crafting. But the crowded legislative calendar and the drawn-out negotiations to finalize the proposal have dimmed their hopes for inclusion.

- **NBC News: Major Hospital Systems In Ohio Requiring Covid Vaccinations For Organ Transplants**: The Cleveland Clinic and University Hospitals, two of the largest health care systems in Ohio, are requiring Covid-19 vaccinations for solid organ transplants. The recently announced mandates will apply to patients and living donors prior to the procedures, according to statements from the health care providers. Patients on a waiting list for organ transplantation from a deceased donor have until Nov. 1 to become vaccinated, or they will be considered “inactive on the waiting list,” the Cleveland Clinic said in a statement Monday.

- **Bloomberg Government: FDA’s Outlook Dims for New Regenerative Therapies**: The regenerative medicine surge anticipated in the next few years will likely be on the lower end as the FDA reels from the Covid-19 pandemic. Regulators and industry expected 10 to 25 new cell and gene therapy products to come online starting in 2025 as scientific advances have led to a booming industry of cutting-edge products that can repair or replace genetic material that causes disease. But the FDA’s biologics center is facing staffing challenges as it struggles to find the scientific expertise to meet this growing demand while at the same time working around the clock to respond to the Covid-19 crisis.

- **Billings Gazette: Montana Faces An Emergency Blood Shortage, 1,000 More Donations Needed Per Week**: A nationwide blood shortage is being felt locally as Montana’s primary blood supplier is calling for 1,000 more donations per week to ease the effects. Nationally, 10,000 more donations are needed each week, according to the American Red Cross, which is seeing post-summer donations drop to its lowest levels in six years. Donations and drives at Montana blood supplier Vitalant have been declining over the last few weeks as COVID-19 precautions force cancellation of blood drives. Donations normally dip in the summer as vacation season takes off and school is out of session. Fall blood drives on high school and college campuses usually replenish blood banks and provide about 20 to 25% of blood supplies.