

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Wednesday, October 14, 2020

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

- 11am: President Trump to deliver remarks to Economic Clubs of New York; Florida; Washington, D.C.; Chicago; Pittsburgh; and Sheboygan from White House Rose Garden
- 4:05pm: Trump departs White House for trip to Iowa
- 7pm: Trump holds rally in Des Moines, Iowa
- 10:45pm: Trump arrives back at White House

CONGRESS

- House is out until mid-November, though lawmakers could be called back with 24 hours' notice to vote on legislation
- Full Senate on recess until Oct. 19
 - 9am: Trump's Supreme Court nominee Barrett appears before Senate Judiciary Committee for second day of questioning

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Stimulus Impasse Triggers Rising Tensions:** Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and McConnell have dug into their opposing stances on pandemic relief, effectively killing off chances for a pre-election stimulus for the economy. With Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin headed to the Middle East next week, further negotiations between Democrats and the White House to reach a deal that can pass Congress after the election also may be put off. The inability to bring months of negotiations to conclusion has sparked increasing tensions, with each camp seeing internal strains rise as it becomes clear there won't be a spending bill to take to the public.
- **Bloomberg Government: Health Insurance Coverage Hearing:** The Ways and Means Oversight Subcommittee plans a hearing next Tuesday taking aim at the administration on health care issues. The Oct. 20 hearing is titled "Maximizing Health Coverage Enrollment Amidst Administration Sabotage."
- **The Wall Street Journal: Trump's Drug-Discount Cards Expected To Reach Medicare Recipients After Election:** President Trump's plan to send 33 million Medicare beneficiaries a card that can be used to help pay for as much as \$200 in prescription drug costs won't be completed until after the election, according to a person familiar with the plan. The cards will be mailed in phases, with some likely going out later in October but most not until after the Nov. 3 presidential election, the person said. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services is spending an estimated \$20 million for administrative costs to print and send letters to Medicare beneficiaries informing them that they will be getting cards, the person said.

- **Bloomberg Government: Medicare Prepares Rule for Covid Vaccine Access:** The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services has a plan to ensure full payment for and speedy access to new Covid-19 vaccines and treatments for Medicare beneficiaries, agency Administrator Seema Verma said yesterday at a virtual conference.

 - Although Congress has made clear it wants Medicare to cover the cost of a Covid-19 vaccine without cost-sharing, Verma said it can take one to three years to work out payment issues for vaccines and other treatments due to agency's "very deliberative processes," which, "unfortunately, can delay putting access to important treatments, innovative technology in the hands of our beneficiaries."
 - So the agency is working on a rule to address this "because we want to make sure that our payment policies aren't standing in the way of beneficiaries having access to the latest treatments," Verma said in an interview with former CMS Administrator Mark McClellan during the Health Care Payment Learning and Action Network Virtual Summit.
- **The Wall Street Journal: Social Security Benefits To Rise 1.3% In 2021:** AARP Chief Executive Jo Ann Jenkins called the cost-of-living adjustment "modest," but said the increase was crucial given the coronavirus pandemic's health and economic consequences. Medicare's trustees in April projected the standard 2021 monthly premium for Medicare Part B, which covers doctor visits and other types of outpatient care, would increase by \$8.70 to \$153.30 from \$144.60 this year. The trustees, citing uncertainty around the Covid-19 outbreak, didn't factor any potential impacts from the pandemic into their projections. However, such a rise in Part B standard premiums would consume about 43% of the increase in the average monthly Social Security retirement benefit. Congress, as part of a short-term government funding deal passed in September, included a measure to limit increases in Medicare Part B premiums next year.
- **Stat: NIH Paused Eli Lilly Covid-19 Antibody Trial Because Of Safety Concerns:** It could be two weeks until there is news on a paused trial of Eli Lilly's closely watched monoclonal antibody treatment for Covid-19. The National Institutes of Health said late Tuesday that it paused the trial because one of the two groups in the study – one had received the antibody, the other a placebo – was doing better than the other. Both groups also received remdesivir, a Covid-19 treatment from Gilead Sciences.