

# American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Thursday, October 14, 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 11:30 a.m. will provide an update on the Covid-19 response and vaccination efforts.
- Biden will also participate in a bilateral meeting with Kenya President Uhuru Kenyatta at 2:15 p.m.

### CONGRESS:

- The House has nothing on the schedule today.
- Senate to convene for a proforma session at 5:00 p.m.

## Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Modern Healthcare: Entry-Level Workers Rejected Jobs In Home Health, Nursing Homes During Pandemic:** When the COVID-19 pandemic hit and 13.7 million workers in roles comparable to direct care lost their jobs in early 2020, they did not turn to direct care jobs, a recent study found. Of the 9.1 million who have now found a new job, "an immeasurably small number of workers" entered the direct care workforce, despite high demand for staff, a study by consulting firm PHI and the Health Workforce Research Center on Long-Term Care at the University of California San Francisco found. "The fact that few workers who lost jobs during the pandemic moved into open direct care jobs highlights the need to improve direct care jobs so they attract well-skilled and dedicated people to care for people who need their services," Joanne Spetz, associate director for research at the Health Workforce Research Center on Long-Term Care at the University of California in San Francisco and an author of the report, said in a press release.
- **Politico: Social Spending Fight May Claim Progressives' Medicare Expansion:** The push to cut more than \$1 trillion from Democrats' social spending bill and possibly scrap a planned expansion of Medicare presents the biggest test to date of the Congressional Progressive Caucus' clout. The 96 members, who account for nearly half of the House majority, showed their strength last month by delaying a bipartisan infrastructure bill until party leaders finish work on the social policy package H.R. 5376 (117). But the coming weeks could prove much tougher, with Speaker Nancy Pelosi intent on trimming the number of programs in the bill and cutting back on how long certain others will be funded to pare the \$3.5 trillion price tag to a figure that centrist Democrats would support.

- Bloomberg Government: Groups Try to Ax Fines for Mental Health Coverage Flaws:** Democrats want to beef up enforcement of rules meant to make it easier to access mental health services using insurance. Business groups say the move won't work and is a ploy to pay for Democrats' wide-reaching social spending agenda. Tucked into a once-\$3.5 trillion domestic spending package is a provision empowering the government to fine health plans and employers that violate federal laws requiring access to mental health care that's on par with other medical care. Health plans now get cited for violating the law and agree to come into compliance and reimburse beneficiaries. Supporters of the new fines say they'll give the Labor Department an effective tool to expand mental health coverage.
- Bloomberg: New Toxic Drug Impurities Detected In Some Heart Pills In US:** Over the past three years, millions of blood pressure pills that contain a probable carcinogen have been recalled around the world. As pharmaceutical companies have worked on finding a fix, they've discovered an entirely new problem: Another potentially dangerous chemical is showing up in the same drugs. The new chemicals are called azido impurities and regulatory authorities say they're mutagenic, meaning they can change someone's DNA and potentially increase cancer risk.
- The New York Times: Social Security Cost Of Living Increase Will Be 5.9% In 2022:** Benefits from Social Security, which tens of millions of retired Americans rely on to pay their bills, will increase by 5.9 percent in 2022, the Social Security Administration said on Wednesday. It is the biggest boost in 40 years as prices for food, cars and rent keep climbing. The increase, known as a cost of living adjustment, is the largest since 1982, when the adjustment was 7.4 percent, according to data from the administration. The average benefit — 70 million Americans receive them — would climb to \$1,657 a month, up \$92 from this year.
- Modern Healthcare: Aetna Hit With A Provider Suit Over Its 'Mystery Re-Pricing Program':** An orthopedic surgical practice sued Aetna on Wednesday, alleging the Hartford, Connecticut-based insurer's failure to reveal its "mystery re-pricing program" of provider claims violates state and federal laws. The lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida, arises from Aetna Life Insurance Company re-pricing a spinal surgery and implant procedure conducted by Surgery Center of Viera, an ambulatory surgical center that specializes in laser fusion and repair operations. The Melbourne, Florida-based provider had seen a patient, identified as C.S., who suffered from a number of spinal conditions that left them in severe pain, according to the suit. The individual was covered under a company plan administered by Aetna through the Employee Retirement Income Security Act. Surgery Center of Viera deemed surgery as "medically necessary" for the patient and submitted a prior-authorization for the procedure to Aetna, which the insurer approved, the complaint said.
- Bloomberg Government: Holmes Faked Pharma Backing to Lure Walgreens, U.S. Says:** Studies by Pfizer and Schering-Plough touted by Theranos to pitch its blood-testing technology shared a common flaw: they weren't real, according to U.S. prosecutors. In a bid to get the Walgreens drug-store chain to use her cutting-edge machines, Elizabeth Holmes sent documents she described as "independent due diligence reports" on Theranos from some of the leading pharmaceutical companies.
- Bloomberg Government: HHS Sued Over Alleged Anti-LGBT Bias in Refugee Program:** The Department of Health and Human Services was sued by a lesbian woman yesterday who

says she was discriminated against due to her sexual orientation by organizations that receive government funding to provide foster services for refugee children. Kelly Easter, who said she attempted to apply to be a foster parent in a federally funded child-welfare program, filed suit in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.