

# American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Tuesday, October 19, 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

- At 2:00 P.M., the President, the Vice President, and the Secretary of the Treasury will meet with House progressives to discuss his legislative agenda
- At 4:30 P.M., the President, the Vice President, and the Secretary of the Treasury will meet with a bicameral group of moderates to discuss his legislative agenda

### CONGRESS:

- The House is scheduled to consider eight bills under expedited floor procedure.
- Senators plan to vote on one of Biden's judicial nominees.

## Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Modern Healthcare: Insurers Want CMS To Toss Rule On 'Breakthrough' Technology Coverage:** Insurers are backing the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services plan to repeal a Trump-era rule allowing Medicare to cover medical devices designated as "breakthrough" technology by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, according to public comments on the proposed rule. Payers, patient safety advocates and independent experts had recommended that President Joe Biden's administration walk back the rule, citing concerns over patient safety and questions about the value of automatically providing Medicare coverage for unproven technologies. If the original rule had taken effect, CMS would have lost its ability to withdraw approval for devices later found to be harmful to people on Medicare.
- **Bloomberg Government: FDA Has Options for Mixing Covid Boosters:** U.S. vaccine regulators have broad authority to allow mix-and-match Covid-19 vaccine boosters under its emergency powers, even if Johnson & Johnson and other companies don't apply for it. The Food and Drug Administration appears poised to clear heterologous boosting, which would allow someone who's eligible for a booster to get an additional shot that's different from their original vaccine. Preliminary results from a National Institutes of Health study indicate mixing Covid-19 vaccines as a booster can produce the same or even more antibodies compared with using the same vaccine for all shots.
  - If and when federal OSHA enacts its national Covid-19 shot-or-test requirement, some state governments opposing that mandate could stave off for months the enforcement of its requirements.

- Bloomberg: Covid Led To Closer Work Between FDA, Pharma, Genentech CEO Says:** Close collaboration between U.S. drugmakers and regulators in the pandemic is speeding the way for new therapies in other areas including Alzheimer's disease, the head of Roche Holding AG's Genentech unit said. The Food and Drug Administration's flexibility in terms of data submission and clinical trials endpoints "offers so much possibility to bring treatments, meaningful treatments, to patients sooner," Genentech Chief Executive Officer Alexander Hardy said Monday in an interview with Bloomberg Television from the HLTH conference in Boston.
- Bloomberg Government: Senate Democrats Seek Domestic Spending Boost:** Senate Democrats released their nine remaining annual government funding bills yesterday, six and a half weeks before the Dec. 3 shutdown deadline. Republicans slammed the bills and lawmakers appear no closer to a bipartisan spending deal. Nondefense programs in the nine bills would get a 13% increase, while defense programs would get a 5% hike, according to a summary from the Senate Appropriations Committee.

  - Republicans criticized the bigger increase for domestic programs compared to military spending, the end of key restrictions on abortion funding, cuts to the Department of Homeland Security, and a boost to Internal Revenue Service funds. Appropriations Vice Chairman Richard Shelby (R-Ala.) called the top-line numbers "a fantasy land" proposal by Democrats. Both the nondefense and defense hikes will have to be closer together for lawmakers to reach a deal, he said.
- Modern Healthcare: Expect A Permanent Boost To Healthcare Wages, Experts Say:** Healthcare workforce labor costs will remain higher than pre-pandemic levels, which has prompted new recruitment and retention strategies. Nearly all of the 73 health system administrators surveyed have had trouble filling vacancies as more clinical staff burn out, according to a new poll from Kaufman Hall. Nearly three-quarters of executives have raised clinicians' wages as a result, while around 90% have boosted pay for support staff.
- NPR: Telehealth Is OK, Patients Say, But Most Prefer In-Person Appointments:** New Yorker Charlie Freyre's sinuses had been bothering him for weeks last winter, during a COVID-19 surge in the city. It was before vaccines became widely available. "I was just trying to stay in my apartment as much as possible," Freyre says, so checking in with his doctor via an online appointment "just seemed like a more convenient option. And you know, it was very straightforward and very easy." The \$20 copay was well worth it for the 26-year-old ad salesman, whose girlfriend also routinely relies on telehealth to see her nutritionist. "It's a very easy way to get an expert opinion without having to necessarily leave your apartment," fill out forms or spend idle time in waiting rooms, Freyre says. "We all know what going to the doctor can be like."