

## American Nephrology Nurses Association

### Daily Capitol Hill Update – Wednesday, October 2, 2019

(The following information comes from Bloomberg Government Website)

#### Schedules: White House and Congress

##### WHITE HOUSE

- 12:10pm: President Trump meets with Finland President Sauli Niinisto; holds expanded working luncheon at 12:45pm
  - 2pm: Trump, Niinisto hold joint press conference
- Vice President Mike Pence travels to Phoenix, Arizona for fundraising event for Sen. Martha McSally

##### CONGRESS

- 10:45am: Pelosi, Schiff press conference
- Schiff has emerged in less than a week as the standard bearer for the House Democrats' impeachment effort, putting him squarely in Trump's crosshairs and leaving him with little margin for error
- House, Senate in first week of a two-week recess

#### Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Trump to Unveil Medicare Plan:** Trump will outline his vision for the future of Medicare this week, contrasting plans with Democrats in a speech promising to strengthen the program for the elderly and disabled. Trump is scheduled to travel to Florida tomorrow where he'll deliver a wide-ranging speech on his administration's health policy, and announce an executive order regarding the Medicare system, titled "Protecting Medicare from Socialist Destruction."
- **Neal Pushes Agencies on Surprise Billing:** House Ways and Means Chairman Richard Neal (D-Mass.) wants to include a "negotiated rulemaking" process to require insurers and doctors work out billing disagreements and hold patients "harmless," meaning they won't be billed for extra charges. "This process has already been successfully used in the health care context, most recently in Medicare for the clinical laboratory fee schedule improvements and for the design for the durable medical equipment payment system," Neal said in a letter.
  - The framework would leave it up to federal agencies to work to identify rates for surprise bills, as opposed to proposals approved by committee which would often require doctors to accept a set rate instead of out-of-network rates. Neal said he will direct his staff to work over the next few weeks to develop the surprise medical billing legislation.

- **Cybersecurity Flaws and Medical Devices:** U.S. officials yesterday warned of cybersecurity vulnerabilities in operating systems powering a variety of medical devices. Computer security researchers discovered 11 vulnerabilities that could allow a hacker to take control of the devices, the FDA warned in an “urgent” advisory along with the Homeland Security Department. “These vulnerabilities may allow anyone to remotely take control of the medical device and change its function, cause denial of service, or cause information leaks or logical flaws, which may prevent device function,” the advisory states.
- **Patient Brokering Investigation:** E&C Republicans are requesting information on patient brokering, saying they are “launching a new phase” in investigations of the “alarming practice.” Patient brokering occurs when individuals serve as intermediaries and profit from the recruitment of patients seeking treatment for substance use disorder, the panel’s Republicans said in a statement. Last Congress, the committee initiated a probe into the practice “and further expanded the investigation into the broader advertising and marketing practices in the substance use disorder treatment industry,” the statement said.
- **ACA Expanded Coverage:** House Energy and Commerce Chairman Frank Pallone (D-N.J.) and Rep. Raul Ruiz (D-Calif.) responded to a new study from the Government Accountability Office they had requested in 2017, which found “significant increases in health insurance coverage” and “expanded access to care” among American Indians and Alaska Natives since the ACA was implemented. “While we still have a lot more work to do to close the health disparities gap among American Indian and Alaska Native communities, we are heartened by the progress made in just the last few years,” they said in a statement.
- **Trump Calls it a ‘Coup’:** Trump ratcheted up his attacks on lawmakers pursuing a whistle-blower complaint, saying that it amounts to a “coup.”
  - “As I learn more and more each day, I am coming to the conclusion that what is taking place is not an impeachment, it is a COUP,” Trump tweeted last night. The tweet marked the seventh time this year that he’s tweeted that he’s been the subject of a coup attempt, but the first since a scandal erupted over his interactions with Ukraine’s president.
- **Menendez Questions Pence, Perry:** Sen. Bob Menendez (D-N.J.) is asking Vice President Mike Pence and Energy Secretary Rick Perry if they played a role in pushing Trump’s personal agenda in Ukraine, including pressuring the Ukrainian president to boost Trump’s 2020 election prospects. Menendez, the top Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, asked about Pence’s canceled trip to attend Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s inauguration and Perry’s trip in Pence’s place, and what the two talked about in meetings with Zelenskyy, according to his letters to the vice president and energy secretary.

- **Morrison Denies Pressure:** Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison denied being pressured by Trump to help probe the origins of the U.S. Justice Department's investigation of Russian interference in the 2016 election. Morrison said today he had a brief telephone conversation with Trump a couple of weeks ago, in which the president asked for a point of contact within the Australian government to help Attorney General William Barr with the inquiry.
- **Conte Approved Barr Meetings:** Meanwhile, Italy's prime minister authorized two secret meetings between Barr and members of the intelligence agencies in Rome as part of a U.S. investigation into the scandal involving Trump's possible ties to Russia, according to one of Italy's leading newspapers. The meetings focused on the origins of the scandal and the fate of Joseph Mifsud, a Rome-based professor involved in the case, *Corriere della Sera* said. A Justice Department official yesterday said that Barr is reviewing action taken by the U.S. intelligence agencies in 2016 and has met with officials from Italy and Australia.
- **Lawyers Aim to Talk to Trump Tax Whistleblower:** House lawyers are trying to speak with an IRS whistleblower who claims that audits of Trump's tax returns have been improperly influenced, according to Neal. "It is accurate to say that there has been an individual who stepped forward and made some allegations" and that House legal counsel is "proceeding on the basis of trying to interview the individual," Neal told reporters in Springfield, Mass., yesterday, according to audio posted by WAMC radio.
  - Meanwhile, Trump got a federal judge to block a California law that would make him disclose his federal tax returns to qualify for the 2020 Republican Party's primary ballot there. U.S. District Judge Morrison C. England Jr. in Sacramento yesterday granted Trump's request to put the law on hold until there's final decision on whether or not it's constitutional.
- **Biden's Grip on 2020 Race Tested:** Joe Biden's once-clear path to the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination is getting murkier. But it's not the Trump impeachment scandal involving Biden's son that's doing it. The former vice president is being tested by the collective toll of age, verbal blunders and a contrast with Sen. Elizabeth Warren's (D-Mass.) dramatic plans to overhaul government. Trump's attempts to tarnish him with scandal have yet to make a dent with Democratic voters -- and heightens the Biden campaign's argument that the president fears him most in a general election.
- **Democrats Plan to Tax the Rich:** The leading Democratic presidential candidates are promising to pay for their policy visions with new taxes on the wealthy -- and some of the 2020 contenders would have to pay dearly. The four top-polling candidates -- Warren, Biden, Bernie Sanders and Kamala Harris -- all earned at least \$500,000 last year, according to their tax returns. And they've embraced tax-the-rich proposals that could increase levies on themselves and similarly-situated peers as they look to unseat Trump.

- **Trump's 2020 Effort Raises \$125 Million:** Trump and the Republican National Committee continued to shovel cash into their re-election war chest, as third-quarter fundraising surged to \$125 million. Trump's campaign, the party and two joint fundraising committees that support them ended the quarter with \$156 million cash on hand, more than twice the amount that President Barack Obama's re-election committees had at this point in 2011. "President Trump has built a juggernaut of a campaign, raising record amounts of money at a record pace," campaign manager Brad Parscale said in statement.
- **Buttigieg, Sanders Can't Convert Cash Into Support:** South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg and Sanders are the top fundraisers of the 2020 Democratic race so far, with a total of \$61 million and \$51 million in their war chests, respectively. But it's not helping them catch on with voters. A strong showing in fundraising used to translate to prominence in the polls. But in 2019, candidates with low or dropping numbers have been leading the money chase. Buttigieg is languishing in fourth place in polls, with around 5%, while Sanders is stuck in third at 18%, behind Biden and Warren.
  - Meanwhile, Harris's fundraising has held steady in the third quarter even as her campaign lost momentum. Harris, currently in fifth place in the RealClearPolitics polling survey, raised \$11.6 million in the third quarter. That was down slightly from the \$11.8 million she raised in the previous quarter.
- **Sessions Tipped to Run For Flores' Seat:** Former Rep. Pete Sessions (R-Texas) is expected to run for Congress again, but this time from a different congressional district, the Associated Press reports, citing Republican megadonor Roy Bailey and two GOP operatives with knowledge of the decision. Sessions, former chairman of the House Rules Committee, is likely to run in the rural central Texas district currently held by retiring Rep. Bill Flores (R-Texas).
- **Pompeo Starts Europe Visit With Tariff Focus:** Pompeo kicked off a visit to Europe with talks that focused on Italian concerns at the prospect of new U.S. tariffs. Pompeo met yesterday with Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte at his official residence in Rome, the first of a three-day visit to the capital that will also take him to the Vatican for a private audience with Pope Francis. Conte stressed that new U.S. tariffs, with food products accounting for the lion's share of Italian exports to the country, would be a big blow for Italy at a time when his government is trying to restart a stagnant economy, newswire Ansa reported.
- **Trump Officials Agree on Ethanol, Biodiesel Plan:** The Trump administration has agreed to a new plan for boosting renewable fuels and offsetting waivers exempting oil refineries from mandates to use them, according to three people familiar with the matter. The tentative deal, which follows weeks of negotiations, permits the EPA to offset those waivers in response to criticism from industry advocates and Midwestern politicians that the exemptions have hurt demand for corn-based ethanol and soybean-based biodiesel. Under the deal, the EPA would factor in recent waivers into new annual

biofuel quotas, by adjusting the targets to reflect a three-year rolling average of exemptions.

- Separately, a Brazilian government decision to allow more U.S. ethanol to enter the country without tariffs may be blocked by the South American nation's Congress in a move that threatens to weaken bilateral trade relations.
  
- **Nominations:** Trump announced his intent to nominate Paul Ray to be administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs at the Office of Management and Budget. Ray currently serves as acting administrator. Trump also announced the intent to nominate Kipp Kranbuhl to be assistant secretary of financial markets for the Treasury Department, according to an emailed White House statement.
  
- **10% of USDA Employees Opted to Move:** In June, the Agriculture Department announced plans to move almost 600 employees from two research agencies out of Washington to Kansas City by Sept. 30, but only about 60 workers actually ended up making the move, the department said. Sixteen Economic Research Service and 45 National Institute of Food and Agriculture employees chose to relocate, according to a USDA spokesperson. "Hundreds of qualified scientists, economists, and support staff have been removed from ERS and NIFA in order to move less than 10% of employees to Kansas City," said Laura Dodson, an ERS economist and acting vice president of an employee union.