

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Friday, October 23, 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

- 1:30pm: President Trump departs White House for The Villages, Fla.
- 4:30pm: Trump holds campaign rally at The Villages, Fla.
- 7pm: Trump holds campaign rally at Pensacola, Fla.; then stays overnight at his West Palm Beach resort Mar-a-Lago

CONGRESS

- House on recess
 - Pelosi Says 'Just About There' on Stimulus; Senate Hurdle Awaits
- Senate meets at noon

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Pelosi-Mnuchin Talks Drag, Likely Pushing Stimulus Past Election:** Prospects for a U.S. stimulus package passing Congress before the Nov. 3 election are fading fast as Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin dicker over the details of a nearly \$2 trillion aid package. With the pace of talks dragging, resistance from Senate Republicans is building and President Donald Trump's ability to twist arms into supporting a deal appears to be waning. Now some House Democrats are telling Pelosi that they don't want to vote on legislation before the election if the Senate won't do so, according to a party official.
- **USA Today: FDA Approves Remdesivir As Treatment For COVID-19 Hospital Patients:** The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on Thursday approved the antiviral drug remdesivir as a treatment for patients with COVID-19 who require hospitalization. Given through an IV, remdesivir works to stop replication of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, according to the drug's manufacturer, California-based Gilead Sciences, Inc. Previously authorized by the FDA for emergency use to treat COVID-19, the drug is now the first and only approved COVID-19 treatment in the United States, Gilead said in a release.
- **Bloomberg Government: Senate:** The Senate is slated to meet at noon. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) plans to hold a vote advancing the nomination of Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court. The chamber could hold a procedural vote on the motion to proceed to Barrett's nomination, which requires a simple majority. McConnell could then file for cloture, or to limit debate, on the nomination. The chamber will remain in session through the weekend as Republicans run down the amount of time required for debate. McConnell says he's aiming for a final vote on the confirmation on Monday.

- **Stat: Blood Plasma Showed No Benefit In Covid-19 Patients In Trial:** Infusing hospitalized Covid-19 patients with blood plasma from people who recovered from the disease had no effect on whether patients got sicker or died, according to the first completed randomized trial of the treatments. The study, published Thursday in BMJ, could re-energize the debate over whether blood plasma is an effective treatment for the disease. An earlier study, run by the Mayo Clinic, showed blood plasma did yield some benefit, leading the Food and Drug Administration to grant emergency access to the therapy in August. That trial, however, did not have a control arm.
- **The Washington Post: Guidelines For Approving A Coronavirus Vaccine Will Be The Focus Of FDA Advisers Meeting Thursday:** Vaccine experts on Thursday rigorously debated the Food and Drug Administration's planned standards for clearing a coronavirus vaccine quickly for broad use, discussing what level of evidence would be sufficient to establish safety and effectiveness. The FDA advisory committee, in an all-day virtual meeting, did not consider any specific vaccine. The session served in large part as a venue for the agency to try to reassure the public that any vaccine will be held to a high standard, not the relatively low bar used this year for emergency use authorization for treatments. The FDA said that though it probably will grant emergency use authorizations — which can be handed out faster than full approvals — for the early vaccines, it will use robust criteria similar to those applied in regular approvals.
- **Bloomberg Government: Trump Adviser Indicates Support for New Opportunity Zones:** A White House official shed some light on what a second term for Trump would mean for opportunity zones, suggesting what would amount to a possible doubling of the number of areas eligible for the tax breaks. There are currently more than 8,700 census tracts across the U.S. designated as opportunity zones under the 2017 tax law.
- **Bloomberg Government: HHS Sued for Drug Discount Dispute Process:** Health-care centers have no remedy against pharmaceutical companies that they say are overcharging them for certain drugs because the government isn't doing its regulatory duties, a community health-care association alleged in a lawsuit against the HHS. The National Association of Community Health Centers called on the government to finalize a dispute resolution policy so facilities have a clearer way to push back against drug companies, according to a complaint filed in federal court in Washington.