

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Thursday, October 24, 2019

(The following information comes from Bloomberg Government Website)

Schedules: White House and Congress

WHITE HOUSE

- 11am: Vice President Mike Pence delivers policy speech on China at the Wilson Center in D.C.
- 11:30am: President Trump receives intelligence briefing
- 1:45pm: Trump participates in Diwali Ceremonial Lighting of the Diya
- 4:30pm: Trump presents Presidential Medal of Freedom to Roger Penske

CONGRESS

- Senate convenes at 10am; resumes consideration of judicial nominates
 - Senate will recess from 10:30am to noon to allow for Lying in State honoring Rep. Elijah Cummings, who served as House Oversight and Reform Committee chairman
- House holds pro forma session; lying in state ceremony for Cummings
 - 11am: House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, other Congressional leaders deliver remarks at U.S. Capitol arrival ceremony for Cummings

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **House Delays Drug-Pricing Bill Vote:** The House won't vote on a bill that would direct the federal government to negotiate with drug manufacturers until next month, Reps. Lloyd Doggett (D-Texas) and Mark Pocan (R-Ill.) said yesterday. Democratic leaders previously sought to hold a floor vote on the legislation (H.R. 3) this month. After next week, the House is out the week of Nov. 4. That means the earliest the measure would come to the floor would be the week of Nov. 11.
- **Surprise Billing Changes:** Ten senators who have been pushing for changes to a measure to tackle surprise medical billing met with a host of industry groups yesterday in hopes of gaining ground on the issue. Led by Sens. Bill Cassidy (R-La.) and Maggie Hassan (D-N.H.), the group has been asking leaders of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee to change their surprise billing package to include some form of arbitration, where doctors can argue for higher reimbursements with a third party.
- **Substance Abuse:** The Senate Finance Committee plans a hearing today on treating substance misuse in the U.S., scams, shortfalls, and solutions. Surgeon General Jerome M. Adams and other witnesses from the HHS Inspector General's Office and Government Accountability Office will testify.

- **Update to Cures Act:** A follow-up to the 2016 biomedical innovation law 21st Century Cures (Public Law 114-255) could be coming out within the next few months, an aide for Rep. Fred Upton (R-Mich.) confirmed. “Our teams are mirroring a similar process to last time, working in a bipartisan, transparent, and collaborative manner to gather bold and innovative ideas while making sure patients and their needs come first,” the aide said. Upton and his Cures partner, Rep. Diana DeGette (D-Colo.), “hope to introduce Cures 2.0 in the coming months.”
- **Bolton Silence Hangs Over Inquiry:** Trump’s former national security adviser, John Bolton, is likely to be called as a witness in the intensifying House impeachment inquiry, and no one -- including the president -- can be sure what he’ll say. Multiple witnesses have testified that Bolton -- who was ousted from the White House last month -- expressed open contempt for efforts to seek politically motivated investigations from Ukraine that are now the heart of the House investigation. The testimony underscores that a pivotal witness remains waiting in the wings.
- **National Security Figures to Testify:** Meanwhile, more present and former Trump administration officials have been scheduled to testify, an official working on the impeachment inquiry said late last night. The witnesses include Charles Kupperman, a former deputy national security adviser, who is expected to appear on Monday. He has long been associated with Bolton. Timothy Morrison, the senior director for Europe and Russia on the National Security Council, is to testify next Thursday. Philip Reeker, the acting assistant secretary of European and Eurasian affairs at the State Department, will appear at a Saturday session, according to an official familiar with the plans.
 - There will be no hearings today and tomorrow because of the tributes and funeral for Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-Md.), the chairman of the House Oversight and Reform Committee, who died last week.
- **Cummings Memorials:** The Capitol Building will open the South entrance of the Capitol Visitor Center to the public from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. today, where Cummings will lie in state. Top leadership including Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.), Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) and others from both chambers will participate in the formal arrival ceremony at 11 a.m. with Cummings’ family and other congressional colleagues in Statuary Hall.
 - Former presidents Barack Obama and Bill Clinton will speak at Cummings funeral tomorrow at New Psalmist Baptist Church in Baltimore, the Washington Post reports.
- **Foreign Assistance to Campaigns:** The House passed a bill that would require campaigns to alert the FBI about their foreign contacts, prohibit the sharing of internal information with foreigners, and require online political ads to identify sponsors. Lawmakers passed the measure on a 227-181 vote. Other provisions would require disclosure of online ad sponsors, seek to clamp down on foreign-controlled campaign spending, and outlaw providing false information to voters about the voting process.

- McConnell has said the bill would hurt free speech rights and he objects to it. Trump yesterday issued a veto threat on the bill. The measure's "ambiguous language would ensnare American citizens and entities acting in good faith in its web of requirements and prohibitions," the White House Office of Management and Budget said in a statement.
- **Panel Endorses Taxing Vaping Like Tobacco:** The House Ways and Means Committee approved legislation that would tax e-cigarettes, such as vaping devices, the same as tobacco products. The bill would place an excise tax equivalent to the \$1.01 federal levy per pack of cigarettes on tobacco alternatives. The legislation is a response to a rapid increase in the use of vaping devices, particularly among teenagers and young adults. The measure is estimated to raise nearly \$10 billion over a decade, according to the congressional Joint Committee on Taxation.
- **Zuckerberg Hears Lawmaker Grievances:** Mark Zuckerberg was ready for a congressional interrogation on Facebook's cryptocurrency project. On the stand for more than six hours yesterday, he got a lashing on every other controversy facing the social media giant, too.
 - The 35-year-old chief executive officer arrived on Capitol Hill prepared to defend the company's plans for Libra, describing the advantages of a global digital coin that would help open up financial systems to the poor and underbanked around the world. From the start of his testimony to the House Financial Services Committee, however, lawmakers made it clear that beyond the questions they had over the new currency, they are skeptical that Facebook should be trusted with the tremendous power it has amassed over 2.7 billion global users.
- **Rep. Hill Gets House Ethics Probe:** The House Ethics Committee opened an investigation of Rep. Katie Hill (D-Calif.) amid allegations she had an improper relationship with a congressional staffer. "The Committee is aware of public allegations that Representative Katie Hill may have engaged in a sexual relationship with an individual on her congressional staff in violation" of House rules, said Chairman Ted Deutch (D-Fla.), and top Republican Kenny Marchant (R-Texas).
- **'Future' Workplace Protection Ideas:** House Democrats plan to craft a list of legislative recommendations to update protections in the modern workplace, informed by a series of hearings. A pair of House Education and Labor subcommittees yesterday held the first of a planned trio of "future of work" hearings. The amorphous phrase is often used to refer to automation on the job, the use of artificial intelligence tools for hiring and recruiting, and gig economy worker rights, among other issues.
- **Biden, Warren See Two Paths to Win 2020 Voters:** Joe Biden and Elizabeth Warren are pitching prominent Democrats on two very different paths to winning voters the party lost to Trump in 2016: He says he can recreate the Obama coalition, while she says her anti-corporate-greed message will appeal to struggling Americans.

- The choice is heightening a clash over the party's future along ideological and generational lines. Biden reflects older and center-left voters' desire to return to a moderate governing style, as Warren channels a rising young left that wants to remake a political system that she says has become unresponsive to the working class. The internal debate comes as the race for the Democratic nomination narrows essentially to Biden and Warren with Bernie Sanders in third place and the rest polling in single digits.
- **Four Women to Moderate Debate:** Democratic candidates will be grilled by a four female journalists at the next presidential debate on Nov. 20, MSNBC said yesterday. The forum in Georgia will be co-hosted by The Washington Post and MSNBC. It will feature Rachel Maddow, Andrea Mitchell and Kristen Welker from the network, and Ashley Parker from the Post.
- **Trump's Real Opponent Is Recession Risk:** The real peril facing Trump's presidency isn't Biden or Warren or even impeachment. It's the possibility that the current mood of economic pessimism could intensify and push the country into a full-blown recession. Historically, a shrinking economy has been a near guarantee of turnover in the White House. In the last century, all the incumbent presidents who lost reelection – George H.W. Bush in 1992, Jimmy Carter in 1980, and Herbert Hoover in 1932 – presided over a recession.
 - Trump doesn't have that problem – yet. Bloomberg economists predict the U.S. economy will grow 2% next year. But forecasts are trending in the wrong direction.
- **Government Employs H-1B Workers:** An attempt by the Labor Department to shine a light on companies that bring on board foreign workers with the help of oft-criticized, third-party placement firms has outed an unexpected employer – the federal government. Under new data collection rules, the government is now able to identify the ultimate employers of workers with H-1B specialty occupation visas, who are essentially leased to companies via these staffing firms. The practice has raised the ire of the Trump administration, which would prefer that American companies hire American workers, even though such H-1B workers are largely tapped for highly technical, tough-to-fill vacancies.
- **Trump Sued Over Waters Rule Rollback:** Environmentalists have taken their first legal shot at the Trump administration's repeal of a landmark Obama-era water regulation. The National Wildlife Federation, Natural Resources Defense Council, and nine other groups sued yesterday in the U.S. District Court for the District of South Carolina, accusing the federal government of breaking the law in its rollback of the 2015 Clean Water Rule. The EPA and Army Corps finalized their decision this week to repeal the regulation.