

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Thursday, October 28, 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 will deliver remarks at the White House this morning at 11:30 a.m., then depart for Rome, Italy for the G20 Leaders' Summit at 12:15 p.m.

CONGRESS:

- The House plans to vote on a measure to protect older job applicants from discrimination.
- Senators plan confirmation votes on five of Biden's nominees, with procedural votes set for two others.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **The Hill: Crucial Talks On Biden Agenda Enter Homestretch:** Senate negotiators say that talks to craft a framework for a \$2 trillion budget reconciliation package are in the homestretch and that President Biden is stepping up his effort to close the deal with Sens. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) and Kyrsten Sinema (D-Ariz.). Senators say an agreement is close but a handful of issues continue to hold it up, including disagreements over expanding Medicare benefits, empowering the federal government to negotiate lower drug prices, a plan to tax billionaires and the details of a plan to tax methane emissions.
- **Bloomberg Government: Drug Prices:** Democrats are likely to narrow their once-sweeping proposal to give the government the authority to negotiate with drug companies. They remain at an impasse around what medicines would be subject to negotiations, lawmakers said yesterday. Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) said there's not yet agreement on whether the bill should limit the number of medicines subject to negotiations and what kinds of medicines would be covered.
- **Bloomberg Government: Medicare Benefits:** Supporters of adding dental, hearing, and vision benefits to Medicare say they're not giving up despite opposition from Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.). Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) said yesterday he believes it's a key provision for the package.
- **Bloomberg Government: Medicaid Expansion:** Manchin is also a key opponent of expanding Medicaid in the 12 state that have refused to open their health public insurance programs to lower-income people under the Affordable Care Act. Georgia's two Democratic senators were key supporters in the Senate for creating a federal Medicaid-like program in non-expansion states like theirs.

- Bloomberg Government: Health-Care Consensus Eludes:** Democrats remain at odds over three key elements of their health-care agenda: expanding Medicaid, adding new Medicare benefits, and empowering the government to negotiate with drugmakers. Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said Democrats “are close to agreement on the priorities and the topline of the legislation,” in a letter to colleagues. “Great progress has been made to address the coverage gap in states that have not enacted the Medicaid expansion,” Pelosi wrote. “This expansion of the Affordable Care Act takes us to nearly universal coverage, hopefully with expanded benefits for Medicare.”
- Bloomberg Government: Nursing Homes Try to Block Covid-19 Cases’ Return to State Courts:** The Ninth Circuit should decline to become the second federal appeals court to hold that Covid-related wrongful death claims against nursing homes must be tried in state, not federal, court, a California-based facility said. The issue of whether the federal officer removal law or the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act gives federal courts exclusive jurisdiction over Covid-related personal injury and wrongful death claims is likely to go to the U.S. Supreme Court, especially if there is disagreement among the appeals courts.

 - The delta variant drove the share of nursing homes reporting staff shortages to the highest level ever in September – and the situation could worsen in coming months, according to new research. As the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services prepares to unveil guidelines requiring all health-care workers to be vaccinated against Covid-19, the data has illuminated lingering concerns that the mandate will further exacerbate the nursing home staffing problem.
- KHN: Democrats’ Plans To Expand Medicare Benefits Put Pinch On Advantage Plans’ Funding:** “Did you think we wouldn’t notice?” an older woman says, speaking into the camera. “You thought you could sneak this through?” an older man later adds. Others warn that Washington is “messing with” their Medicare Advantage health coverage and trying to raise their premiums. But the television ad, paid for by Better Medicare Alliance, a research and advocacy group for Medicare Advantage plans, doesn’t spell out what cuts congressional lawmakers might be trying to slip past unsuspecting seniors.
- CNN: Fluvoxamine: Cheap, Generic Anti-Depressant Called Luvox May Reduce Severe Covid-19 Disease, Study Finds:** A cheap, generically available anti-depressant may reduce the risk of severe Covid-19 disease by close to a third in people at high risk, researchers reported Wednesday. A trial among about 1,500 patients in Brazil showed those who took the drug, known as fluvoxamine, were less likely to progress to severe disease and to require hospitalization. The drug, sold under the brand name Luvox, is a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI) most often used to treat obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and depression. But it can affect inflammation, said Dr. Angela Reiersen, an associate professor of psychiatry at Washington University in St. Louis who worked on the study, published in The Lancet Global Health.