

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Thursday, October 3, 2019

(The following information comes from Bloomberg Government Website)

Schedules: White House and Congress

WHITE HOUSE

- 10am: President Trump departs White House for Ocala, Florida
- 1:05pm: Trump arrives at The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center in The Villages, Florida
- 1:10pm: Trump delivers remarks, signs an executive order on Medicare for seniors
- Trump to Unveil Medicare Plan in Bid to Contrast Democrat Rivals
- 2:25pm: Trump holds photo op with supporters
- 3:05pm: Trump departs en route to D.C.; returns to White House at 5:45pm

CONGRESS

- House, Senate out on recess
- Kurt Volker, the former U.S. special envoy to Ukraine who is mentioned in the whistle-blower report, will appear before House panels today, a committee official says

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **DeGette Pitches Insulin Bill:** Rep. Diana DeGette (D-Colo.), co-chair of the Congressional Diabetes Caucus, unveiled a bipartisan bill yesterday that aims to reduce “skyrocketing” costs of insulin in the U.S. The legislation, which DeGette plans to introduce after the congressional recess, would provide insulin manufacturers an “incentive” to set the list price of their insulin at or below the price it was set at in 2006, according to a statement from DeGette. “That would cut the price of most insulin products on the market today by more than 75%,” according to the statement.
- **Grassley Requests Information on Medicaid:** Senate Finance Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) sent a letter to CMS Administrator Seema Verma to ask for more information on Medicaid payments being made on behalf of deceased beneficiaries, according to a statement, citing federal watchdog reports. “I encourage the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to expand its efforts to prevent, identify, and reduce payment risks, and enhance program oversight to eliminate fraudulent or improper Medicaid payments for ineligible individuals,” Grassley wrote.
- **Trump Medicare Order Sparks Fear of Cuts:** The White House has been tight-lipped for months about Trump’s executive order on Medicare to be released today. The directive, delayed since August, is expected to strengthen the private Medicare Advantage plans

that cover more than 22 million people while criticizing Medicare for All proposals being championed by Democratic presidential candidates. The chief executive officer of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, Max Richtman, worries Medicare could be targeted for cuts by congressional Republicans eager to pay down the deficit if Trump is re-elected in 2020.

- **Federal Workers to Pay Extra for Insurance:** Millions of federal workers will see their health-care premiums jump an average of 5.6% in 2020 due in large part to the return of a congressionally mandated health provider tax and ballooning medical costs, the Office of Personnel Management announced yesterday. The announcement came as the agency released its annual list of health-care plans accessible to federal workers, retirees, and their families through the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program, the country's largest employer-sponsored health benefits plan.
- **Pompeo Aides Warned Against Ukraine Conspiracies:** Aides to Pompeo cautioned against unfounded reports suggesting that the U.S. Embassy in Ukraine was a hotbed of Democratic support, according to documents turned over to Congress Wednesday by the State Department's watchdog. The warnings were made even though Trump has echoed some of the claims.
 - Emails from March detailing the State Department staffers' concerns were included in a package of files sent to Linick and obtained by Bloomberg News. He shared them with congressional investigators pursuing an impeachment inquiry into Trump. The emails, sent to senior Pompeo adviser Ulrich Brechbuhl from Phil Reeker, the acting assistant secretary of State for Europe, show Reeker and other officials discussing a series of articles by conservative writers that suggested the U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, Marie Yovanovitch, was a Trump opponent and that Ukraine had worked to sway the 2016 U.S. election for Hillary Clinton.
- **Perry Could Be Called to Testify:** Energy Secretary Rick Perry may be called to testify before Congress in the House's ongoing impeachment inquiry, Rep. Jamie Raskin (D-Md.) said yesterday. Documents and communications related to Perry's attendance at Zelenskyy's inauguration and a White House meeting days later are among the records being sought by House Democrats in a subpoena of Giuliani.
 - "Obviously he's had some involvement with Ukraine issues," Raskin told reporters. Raskin is a member of the House Oversight and Reform Committee, one of the panels involved in the impeachment probe, and said no final decisions have been made, Ari Natter reported.
- **Impeachment Takes Oxygen Out of the Room:** The impeachment inquiry has roiled the long-held plans of the Democrats who hope to replace him, stealing their most precious commodity: time to make their case. The investigation is crowding out campaigns on cable news and social media, wreaking havoc on their messaging and hurting lower-tier candidates' chances of breaking out. The drama is building with the approach of a Oct. 15 debate in the key state of Ohio, with another debate coming in November.

- **Biden Warns Trump:** Biden yesterday gave a preview of a potential general election face-off with Trump by taking a more aggressive tone and assailing the president for his “abuse of power” and for “smearing” him and his family. “Let me make something clear to Trump and his hatchet men and the special interests funding his attacks against me – I’m not going anywhere,” Biden said to applause in a speech in Reno, Nev. “You’re not going to destroy me. And you’re not going to destroy my family.” Biden said that “like every bully in history,” Trump is “afraid. He’s afraid of just how badly I would beat him next November.”
- **Booker Takes Aim at Childhood Poverty:** Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.) today unveiled a plan that he says would cut childhood poverty by two-thirds through a proposed child tax credit and by bolstering existing welfare programs. The tax credit would give a \$300-a-month “child allowance” to families with “younger kids,” and \$250 to families with children up to the age of 18. The credit would be indexed to inflation.
- **Trump Has ‘Weighty Constitutional Issues’:** The Justice Department is siding with Trump’s request to delay enforcement of a subpoena for his tax filings and other financial records to give his legal team time to address the “weighty constitutional issues” involved in the case. The Justice Department yesterday told U.S. District Judge Victor Marrero that the government agrees with Trump that the case should be heard in federal court, not New York state court, as Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr. said. And the lawyers said Marrero should impose a “short delay” of the deadline for enforcement of the subpoena if the parties can’t agree to one themselves.
- **Senate Race Ratings:** Projections for two closely watched 2020 Senate races were updated by Larry Sabato’s Crystal Ball this morning. Democrats’ most vulnerable senator, Sen. Doug Jones (D-Ala.), moved from Toss-up to Leans Republican, while Sen. Thom Tillis (R-N.C.) moved from Leans Republican to Toss-up.
- **Lawmakers Ask Fed to Explore Digital Currency:** House Financial Services Committee members asked the Federal Reserve to “take up the project of developing a U.S. dollar digital currency.” The “nature of money is changing” and more than 40 countries have already developed or are working on their own national digital currencies, Reps. Bill Foster (D-Ill.) and French Hill (R-Ark.) said in a letter to Federal Reserve Board Chairman Jerome Powell. The two members lead the committee’s Artificial Intelligence Task Force. Hill is also the senior Republican on the committee’s Fintech Task Force.
- **Private Equity Flexes Muscle in Washington:** As Republicans set out to overhaul the federal tax code in 2017, the private equity world leveraged its influence to protect the wildly lucrative tax break that’s helped mint more billionaires than almost any other industry. KKR & Co., for example, had a former head of the Republican National Committee rounding up lawmakers on Capitol Hill to fight for private equity’s cause.

- The industry now appears to be heading into an even bigger war to preserve the generous tax breaks and loose oversight that helped it amass more than \$4 trillion in assets. Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), climbing in polls as she seeks the Democratic presidential nomination, has laid out proposals that would dramatically rein in its profits if she's elected next year.
- **U.S. Tariffs Europe Planes, Whiskies:** The price of Scotch, French wine, cheese and other European exports is set to go up in the U.S. after the administration announced new tariffs on billions of dollars of EU products starting Oct. 18. The president got the go-ahead from the World Trade Organization yesterday to levy tariffs on as much as \$7.5 billion worth of European exports yearly in retaliation for illegal government aid to Airbus. The award is the largest in WTO history. The U.S. plans to levy a 10% tariff on large civil aircraft from France, Germany, Spain and the U.K. It will also slap 25% levies on a range of other items including Irish and Scotch whiskies; wine, olives and cheese; as well as certain pork products, butter and yogurt from various European nations, according to the U.S. Trade Representative's Office.
- **Apple CEO Wades Into DACA Fight:** Apple executives Tim Cook and Deirdre O'Brien waded into the battle over immigration, filing a brief with the Supreme Court in favor of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which provided legal protection to people brought into the U.S. as children. In its brief, Apple profiled five DACA recipients, known as Dreamers, and said it employs 443 of these people from more than 25 countries. "We are distressed at the prospect of ripping our DACA colleagues from the fabric of our company," the executives wrote. "This issue is a moral one: Our country made a deal with a highly vulnerable population interested in a bright future, and we should keep that deal."
- **U.S. Jobs Outlook Is Weak:** The last time U.S. payroll forecasts were this low, hurricanes had slammed the country in 2017, temporarily closing businesses. Or go back to 2013 when there was a federal government shutdown. But for the September jobs report due tomorrow, Wall Street economists see a more persistent storm at play: The trade war and manufacturing recession. Those factors are starting to permeate the economy at a time when companies are already struggling with a shrinking pool of qualified workers.
 - The combination of forces has pushed down the median estimate for private payrolls to a gain of just 130,000 last month. That's the weakest projection heading into a jobs report in seven years, outside of months affected by events such as major storms or the shutdown.