

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Friday, October 4, 2019

(The following information comes from Bloomberg Government Website)

Schedules: White House and Congress

WHITE HOUSE

- 11am: President Trump visits wounded service-members at Walter Reed Military hospital
- 2:15pm: Trump receives intelligence briefing
- 4:30pm: Trump delivers remarks at Young Black Leadership Summit
- White House is expected to send House Speaker Nancy Pelosi a letter arguing the president and White House officials can ignore lawmaker demands for documents and testimony unless the House holds a vote formalizing the impeachment inquiry

CONGRESS

- House, Senate on recess
- House Democrats released text messages that show Kurt Volker, the former envoy for Ukraine, coordinating with the U.S. ambassador to the European Union, Gordon Sondland, to help craft a statement for President Volodymyr Zelenskiy in early September

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **New Medicare Executive Order:** Medicare will encourage seniors to consider private insurance plans that offer many of the same benefits under an executive order steering patients away from traditional coverage that pays doctors based on the number of services provided. The order, which President Donald Trump signed yesterday, is to ensure that Medicare doesn't favor its traditional coverage over Medicare Advantage, plans where private insurers manage benefits on behalf of the government, Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar told reporters on a call. The order will also have the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services create a demonstration project allowing seniors to directly share in savings that they provide to the program, Azar said.
- **Trump's Story of Hunter Biden's China Venture:** Trump's tale of how Hunter Biden flew into Beijing aboard Air Force Two and left a billionaire – an episode he now wants China to investigate – isn't supported by known details about the episode. Trump's account isn't even a faithful retelling of the original allegation first outlined in a 2018 book by a conservative author – an accusation whose details are in dispute. There's no indication that Hunter Biden has profited from the Chinese deal, much less made billions.

- **Whistleblower Timeline Central to Battle:** Trump and his allies are seeking to sow doubt about Democrats' impeachment inquiry by suggesting that House Intelligence Chairman Adam Schiff (D-Calif.) orchestrated the whistleblower complaint that touched off the investigation.
 - Schiff's aides have flatly denied suggestions of coordination, and the attorneys for the unnamed intelligence official denied that he had any contact with them or the whistleblower. The aides and the lawyers all said the early contact between the whistleblower and an intelligence committee staffer were standard practice for handling such cases and only offered guidance on next steps.

- **Pompeo Sticks Even Closer to Trump:** Michael Pompeo has emerged as one of Trump's most prominent defenders even as the Ukraine controversy threatens to engulf the secretary of state — and his political future. Pompeo, the last remaining member of Trump's original national security team, has made clear he will fight what he calls congressional overreach by Democrats leading the impeachment inquiry who are demanding documents and testimony from the diplomats who work for him. And he's said that the president did nothing wrong when he asked Ukraine's president to investigate the Bidens.

- **Trump Tactics Mirror His Anti-Mueller Tactics:** Trump is making his case against an impeachment inquiry by relying on the same tricks and tactics he used to fight the investigation by Special Counsel Robert Mueller. He's called it a hoax, fake news and a witch hunt. He's attacked investigators as partisans, called the process unfair and prematurely claimed exoneration.

- **Lawmakers Balance Legislating While Impeaching:** As Democrats pursue their probe of Trump, they also seek to complete negotiations with Republicans and the administration on the U.S-Mexico-Canada trade agreement, advance drug price legislation, finish spending bills for 2020 and enact gun control legislation.
 - The history of the last two Congresses that conducted impeachment proceedings shows those efforts to remove a president didn't stop legislative action.
 - "You can still get legislation done," said former Sen. Trent Lott (R-Miss.) who was majority leader when Clinton was impeached by the House and acquitted by the Senate in early 1999. Lott was also a member of the House Judiciary Committee when it approved articles of impeachment against President Richard Nixon. Soon after his Senate acquittal, "Clinton called me and wanted to discuss some bill," Lott said. "He never mentioned that we just had his impeachment trial and I had voted for the articles of impeachment. It was just as if that hadn't happened. So we went forward."
 - Still, Pelosi is navigating tricky political terrain with Democrats revving up the impeachment inquiry.

- **Impeachment Fundraising Shows Political Fight:** Trump's fundraising strategy around the fight over impeachment proceedings shows that for now he views it as more of a

political battle than a legal one. Since Democrats announced an inquiry on Sept. 24, Trump's campaign has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on ads on Facebook's and Twitter's social networks mentioning impeachment. Even though the ads call for supporters to contribute to an impeachment defense fund, or sign up to be a member of his Official Impeachment Defense Task Force, clicking on the link directs supporters to the website for his re-election campaign fund.

- **Biden's \$15.2M Trails Sanders, Buttigieg:** Biden's campaign said he raised had \$15.2 million in the third quarter, putting him behind lower-polling candidates Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg. The announcement came shortly after Biden himself disclosed fundraising total at a private fundraiser in Palo Alto, Calif. Biden's campaign said its average donation was \$44 and that 56% of those contributing in the third quarter gave for the first time. The last week of the quarter was Biden's best for online fundraising since May when the campaign solicited donations at his kickoff rally in Philadelphia.
 - Meanwhile, Marianne Williamson raised \$3.1 million for her long-shot presidential campaign, roughly doubling the amount she collected in the previous period. She ended the quarter with \$655,276 cash on hand, and has 140,000 unique contributors since starting her campaign, according to a statement released by her campaign manager, Patricia Ewing. Williamson failed to meet the fundraising and polling requirements to participate in the debate of Democratic candidates last month and didn't qualify for the next forum on Oct. 15 in Ohio.
- **Trump Prepares for Potential Warren Face-Off:** Trump suggested yesterday he's preparing for a possible face-off against Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) as the Democratic nominee in the 2020 presidential election. Calling her "Pocahontas," Trump reprised a favorite slur for Warren, who's surging in polls of candidates for the Democratic nomination. Trump said he thought his use of the nickname had ruined Warren's prospects in the Democratic primary, but now sees her as a potential victor over Biden.
- **Lieberman's Son Launches Senate Bid:** Matt Lieberman, son of former 2000 Democratic vice presidential nominee and Sen. Joe Lieberman (I-Conn.), announced that he's running for a Senate seat in Georgia. Lieberman is running as a Democrat in a special election to succeed Sen. Johnny Isakson (R), who in August announced that he'd retire at the end of 2019. Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp (R) is expected to appoint a Republican to take Isakson's seat until the special election is held next fall.
- **Republicans Tiptoe Around Being Green in 2020:** Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine) touts herself as the only Republican to vote against both of Trump's picks to head the EPA. Sen. Cory Gardner (R-Colo.) brushed aside the president's request for deep cuts for the Energy Department's renewable energy initiatives and attempt to zero out next-generation energy research by ARPA-E. Sen. Martha McSally (R-Ariz.), though a new

arrival to the Senate, sided with Democrats in several high-profile showdowns over climate change as a House member, including a vote to scrap requirements that the Pentagon assess its vulnerability to rising sea level and other climate impacts.

- The three, considered the most vulnerable Senate Republicans seeking re-election in 2020, have distanced themselves from Trump and some Republican colleagues who question whether climate change is real or whether humans are contributing to it.

- **Trump's EPA to Detail Biofuel Boost:** The Trump administration today will announce plans to aid corn-based ethanol and soybean-based biodiesel, capping weeks of deliberations over how to temper a wave of criticism from biofuel advocates in the U.S. Midwest. The EPA is slated to announce several changes to propel those renewable fuels, including a commitment to bolster annual biofuel-blending quotas to compensate for waivers exempting some small refineries from the mandates. The shift, which still must be formally proposed and codified, would effectively force bigger, non-exempted refineries to take up the slack. The planned announcement was described by several people familiar with the move, who asked for anonymity before a formal rollout.

- **Wheeler Tweet Wasn't 'Purely Partisan' GAO Says:** The EPA didn't violate federal law about partisan communication when it sent a celebratory tweet in April 2018 about Andrew Wheeler's confirmation to be the agency's deputy administrator, the Government Accountability Office said. The EPA's tweet did include political content, but wasn't a "purely partisan communication" because it gave the public information about the agency's management, the GAO concluded in an opinion yesterday. Therefore, the tweet "maintained a connection to EPA's official business," GAO said.

- **Facebook Told to Slow Encryption Effort:** Facebook should stop its plans for end-to-end encryption in messaging applications until governments can ensure lawful access to user communications, according to a joint letter signed by U.S., U.K. and Australian justice officials. U.S. Attorney General William Barr and legal officials from the U.K. and Australia called upon Facebook to take certain steps before it implements end-to-end encryption on messaging products, according to the letter obtained by Bloomberg News. The social media company should work with governments to "embed the safety of the public in system designs," according to the letter signed by Barr, acting Homeland Security Secretary Kevin McAleenan, U.K. Home Secretary Priti Patel, and Australian Minister of Home Affairs Peter Dutton.