

# American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Wednesday, October 6, 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 meet at the White House at 1 p.m. with business leaders and executives about the debt limit and possible economic consequences of the fiscal standoff.

### CONGRESS:

- The Senate today will consider one of Biden's judicial nominees and hold a procedural vote on a measure to suspend the debt limit.

## Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **KHN: Major Insurers Running Billions Of Dollars Behind On Payments To Hospitals And Doctors:** Anthem Blue Cross, the country's second-biggest health insurance company, is behind on billions of dollars in payments owed to hospitals and doctors because of onerous new reimbursement rules, computer problems and mishandled claims, say hospital officials in multiple states. Anthem, like other big insurers, is using the covid-19 crisis as cover to institute "egregious" policies that harm patients and pinch hospital finances, said Molly Smith, group vice president at the American Hospital Association. "There's this sense of 'Everyone's distracted. We can get this through,'" she said.
- **Bloomberg Government: Biden Team Seeks to Pare Back Economic Agenda:** The president, meanwhile, is seeking to drum up public support for the plan – and pressure its opponents – in trips to political battlegrounds. Biden's strategy to enact two packages – a roads-and-bridges focused infrastructure plan and a trimmed-back social-spending bill – is evolving after a tense week of negotiations that yielded ill will between liberal and centrist factions of the Democratic Party.
  - After congressional leaders had to indefinitely postpone votes on the measures, one Democratic operative said he hadn't seen such vitriol between members of his own party since Biden took office.
  - In meetings this week, the president has warned progressives – who've sought expansive new spending on education and social programs combined with tax hikes on the wealthy – that they will have to temper expectations for the final legislation. But he has also dialed up pressure on Congress to pass both packages, casting them in a speech yesterday in a Republican-leaning corner of Michigan as essential to keep the U.S. competitive with fast-growing foes and calling opponents "complicit in America's decline."

- **The Washington Post: Hospital System Says It Will Deny Transplants To The Unvaccinated In ‘Almost All Situations’:** A Colorado-based health system says it is denying organ transplants to patients not vaccinated against the coronavirus in “almost all situations,” citing studies that show these patients are much more likely to die if they get covid-19. The policy illustrates the growing costs of being unvaccinated and wades into deeply controversial territory – the use of immunization status to decide who gets limited medical care. The mere idea of prioritizing the vaccinated for rationed health resources has drawn intense backlash, as overwhelmingly unvaccinated covid-19 patients push some hospitals to adopt “crisis standards of care,” in which health systems can prioritize patients for scarce resources based largely on their likelihood of survival.
- **Bloomberg Government: Paid Leave Allies Mull Fallback Options:** Supporters of House Democrats’ plan to create a nationwide paid family and medical leave program are girding for a battle over possible cuts to the proposal as pressure builds to trim the price tag.
  - Longtime proponents of paid leave say the Covid-19 pandemic laid bare the need for a robust, permanent program that’s available to as many workers as possible. But with a reset in negotiations this week, paid-leave advocates are calling for Democrats to maintain a comprehensive leave program, even though it could cost as much as \$550 billion. At the same time, they’re privately strategizing around what would be the most effective – or least undesirable – way to narrow the House Ways and Means Committee’s proposal.
- **Axios: Organ Procurement Organization Data To Be Analyzed For First Time:** Several organ procurement organizations will open up at least a decade's worth of their data for analysis in the first such effort to improve the understanding of the American organ procurement system, the Federation of American Scientists announced late Tuesday. The federal government knows very little about how those on the organ donation list are being helped in real-time. HHS data suggests improvements in organ recovery practices could lead to at least 7,000 additional lifesaving transplants every year.
- **Bloomberg Government: Health-Care Cost Increases Returning, Employers Report:** Health benefit costs are expected to increase by more than 5% in both 2021 and 2022, employee benefits advisory firm Willis Towers Watson reported yesterday. The Willis Towers Watson 2021 Best Practices in Health Care Survey of 378 U.S. companies employing 5.9 million workers, conducted in June and July, found that achieving affordable costs was a key priority for 90% of respondents.