

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Thursday, October 7, 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

- **Bloomberg Government: Democratic Plans Stall in Senate:** Key elements of the Democratic agenda are in danger of being buried in the Senate as lawmakers wrangle over the social spending package and with Congress scheduled to be in session for only some 30 more days this year. A broad swath of party priorities leaders say will prove popular are included in that massive piece of legislation they're rushing to finalize and in the bipartisan Senate-passed infrastructure bill. But Schumer and Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) are likely to put off work on immigration, policing, gun control, and other issues of great interest to the Democratic base.
- **KHN: Collins' Skillful Piloting Helped NIH Steer Clear Of Political Minefields:** It's remarkable that the reputation of the National Institutes of Health has remained mostly intact through the covid-19 pandemic, even as other federal science agencies, including the Food and Drug Administration and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, have come under partisan fire. That is in no small part due to NIH's soft-spoken but politically astute director, Dr. Francis Collins. The motorcycle-riding, guitar-playing Collins announced Tuesday he will step down by the end of the year from his job as chief of the research agency, having served more than a dozen years under three presidents.
- **Bloomberg Government: ARPA-H Faces Hurdles Without Spending Plans:** President Joe Biden's plan to set up an NIH incubator for biomedical discoveries could face setbacks as the government runs on a continuing resolution through early December. But the government is still moving forward with plans to open the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health in the coming months, according to the White House's point-person on the project. Biden unveiled the ARPA-H plan this spring as part of a fiscal 2022 budget request.
 - "We're continuing our planning and engagement efforts that we've been launching. We'll continue to do so, and we're optimistic, obviously, about getting something in [fiscal year] '22," Tara Schwetz, assistant director for biomedical science at the White

House Office of Science and Technology Policy, said in an interview. But the continuing resolution that averted a government shutdown and funds the government through Dec. 3 doesn't allow agencies to launch new programs.

- **Bloomberg Government: Medicaid Incentive Could End Under Senate Plan:** Democrats are mulling whether to rescind billions of dollars meant to prod states to expand their Medicaid programs, in part to pay for a federal Medicaid-like coverage plan in those states. The debate on whether to rescind the funds divides some Senate and House Democrats.
 - House aides say the incentive money, which Congress provided in March, should remain available instead of being used to offset part of Democrats' sweeping social spending and tax package. The new legislation's federal fallback program for non-expansion states isn't meant to replace state-run Medicaid programs, they say. Senate supporters of adding new Medicaid coverage in these GOP-led states say their state legislatures and governors have shown no amount of cash will persuade them to open up eligibility for their public health insurance programs.
- **Bloomberg: FDA Reviewing Data On Mixing And Matching Covid Booster Shots, Fauci Says:** Data that may show the safety and effectiveness of mixing and matching boosters of different Covid-19 shots are under review by U.S. regulators, presidential adviser Anthony Fauci said. A study of adults who received booster doses of different Covid-19 vaccines than their original shots has been completed, Fauci said in an interview on Bloomberg Television's "Balance of Power with David Westin," and the data have been presented to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The National Institutes of Health study looked at the safety, immunogenicity and efficacy of mixing and matching of the three U.S. authorized vaccines for booster purposes.
- **Politico: Biden Closes In On Pick To Lead Food And Drug Administration:** The Biden administration is closing in on a nominee to lead the Food and Drug Administration, four people familiar with the process told POLITICO. The White House was nearing a final pick anyway, but National Institutes of Health Director Francis Collins' Tuesday announcement that he would step down accelerated the timeline, according to one person with knowledge of the matter.
- **Modern Healthcare: AHA Asks Congress To Stop Looming Medicare Cuts:** The American Hospital Association is urging Congress to stop cuts to Medicare before they take effect next year, citing the uncertain trajectory of the COVID-19 pandemic and possible variants. "Now is not the time for reductions in Medicare payments to providers," Stacey Hughes, executive vice president of AHA wrote in a letter to Congressional leadership. Without Congressional action, Medicare will face a 4% cut triggered by the COVID-19 relief bill that passed earlier this year.