

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Monday, November 1, 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

- President to participate in a bilateral meeting with His Excellency Joko Widodo, President of the Republic of Indonesia at 12:00 P.M. EST.
- The President will attend a reception hosted by the Right Honorable Boris Johnson, M.P., Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland at 2:45 P.M. EST.

CONGRESS:

- The House is scheduled to vote on eight bills under expedited floor procedure.
- Senators will vote on two of Biden's judicial nominees to fill vacancies on two federal appeals courts.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Dialysis Centers to Get \$220 Million Bump:** Medicare payments to freestanding dialysis centers will increase an estimated 2.5% in 2022 while hospital-based facilities will see a 3.3% payment bump, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services reported Friday. The increases announced in the final payment rule (RIN 0938-AU39) will hike Medicare payments by \$220 million next year, while total program spending will increase by \$290 million for dialysis patients with kidney failure, or end-stage renal disease.
- **Bloomberg Government: Pelosi Leading Talks to Include Drug Price Cuts:** Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) is leading an effort to add a plan to cut prescription drug prices to Biden's \$1.75 trillion economic plan, and lawmakers are optimistic a deal can be reached. The emerging plan could allow Medicare to negotiate drug prices for the first time, and talks continue on what categories of drugs would be subject to the cost-cutting negotiation power.
 - To do that and not lose votes, Democrats will likely have to drop or modify a proposed 95% excise tax on drug companies that was originally proposed to force them to lower prices for younger patients not part of Medicare. The changes to drug prices appear to have a better shot than another liberal priority, paid family leave. But already, leading proponents of that policy are signaling they will not be able to convince Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) to go along with it.
 - Biden left mention of cutting drug prices out of the outline he presented to Congress on Thursday, but even opponents of the original House provision said they would be open to a more limited version. Sen. Kyrsten Sinema (D-Ariz.) had agreed to at least

some version of drug price cuts in a deal with the White House, a person familiar with her views said.

- Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) said Pelosi is “intimately” involved in talks and they are working with drug price provision holdout Rep. Scott Peters (D-Calif.). He said Peters is on track to prevail in his quest to have the 95% tax penalty changed.
 - “We are working to add things in,” Rep. Ro Khanna (D-Calif.), who backs the effort to curb prescription-drug prices, said on CBS’s “Face the Nation,” yesterday. “I think we can have the vote by Tuesday,” Khanna said.
- **AP: Dems See Progress In Adding Drug Cost Curbs To Budget Bill:** Democrats have made significant progress toward adding compromise provisions curbing prescription drug prices to their massive social and environment package, two congressional aides said Sunday. Talks were continuing and no final agreement had been reached. But the movement raised hopes that the party’s 10-year, \$1.75 trillion measure would address the longtime Democratic campaign promise to lower pharmaceutical costs, though more modestly than some wanted.
 - **Bloomberg Government: Hospitals Put Off Job Requirement for Staff as Rule Draws Near:** The number of hospitals mandating the Covid-19 vaccine for their workers has leveled off since the Biden administration announced all health-care workers at facilities paid by Medicare and Medicaid would need to get the jab. Hospitals have been trailblazers for mandating vaccines in the workplace, requiring the shot for their staff well in advance of state and federal orders. Health-care workers are at higher risk of getting and transmitting the coronavirus, and vaccine mandates have been one of several tools some hospitals have implemented to keep their staff safe.
 - **Bloomberg Government: White House Lists State-by-State Aid in Bid to Pass Biden Plan:** The White House will seek to win support for Biden’s economic agenda by listing the benefits that would flow to each state under the Democrats’ spending framework, including free preschool and subsidized child care. The plan would allow West Virginia to expand access for preschool to 27,753 three- and four-year-olds, along with 139,000 in Arizona, the White House said. An estimated 457,864 children in Arizona would become eligible for subsidized child care, along with an estimated 94,170 youngsters in West Virginia, according to the estimate.
 - **KHN: Nursing Home Residents Overlooked In Scramble For Covid Antibody Treatments:** Of the dozens of patients Dr. Jim Yates has treated for covid-19 at his long-term care center in rural Alabama, this one made him especially nervous. The 60-year-old man, who had been fully vaccinated, was diagnosed with a breakthrough infection in late September. Almost immediately, he required supplemental oxygen, and lung exams showed ominous signs of worsening disease. Yates, who is medical director of Jacksonville Health and Rehabilitation, a skilled nursing facility 75 miles northeast of Birmingham, knew his patient needed more powerful interventions – and fast.
 - **Politico: Buttigieg: ‘We’re The Closest That We’ve Ever Been’ To Passing Infrastructure And Spending Bills:** Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg sounded confident Sunday that the House is close to passing both the bipartisan infrastructure bill and President Joe Biden’s domestic agenda spending bill. “What I know is that we’re the closest that we’ve ever been, and it looks like we’re teed up for major action soon,” Buttigieg said on “Fox News Sunday.” “And the president is sounding that note of urgency not just because the president needs it, but because the country needs it.”

- **Axios: America's Substance Use Crisis Has Spiraled During The Pandemic:** The forced isolation, disruption to treatment and resource demands created by the pandemic have set America back in its efforts to end the opioid epidemic. It's not just opioids. The use of other substances, particularly alcohol, increased over the last year and a half, and experts say this may lead to more people struggling with addiction. "Addiction is a disease of isolation," said Caleb Alexander, a professor of epidemiology at Johns Hopkins.