American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Friday, November 12, 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

• The president will participate at 8:30 a.m. in an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation leaders’ meeting to discuss the Covid-19 pandemic and the world economy.

• Biden will hold a cabinet meeting at 2:30 p.m. to discuss the rollout of the infrastructure effort.

• Biden will depart for Camp David for the weekend at 5:40 p.m.

CONGRESS:

• The House plans a committee work week, with no floor activity scheduled. The Senate is also on hiatus for floor work this week.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

• Modern Healthcare: Domestic Policy Bill Gains Could Offset Losses for Hospitals in Medicaid Gap States: States without Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act may benefit from proposed funding to close coverage gaps, in spite of other planned cuts to the public insurance program, according to researchers. The current draft of President Joe Biden’s Build Back Better Act includes provisions to increase healthcare subsidies and extend coverage, particularly for the 12 states in the Medicaid expansion gap and residents with incomes below the federal poverty level.

• Bloomberg Government: Drug Shortage Reporting Rules Prompt Questions: The meaning of a “life-saving” drug and how quickly supply chain data can become available are among the questions pharmaceutical companies are raising as they try to comply with expanded reporting rules aimed at fighting pandemic-fueled shortages. The goal of the updated rules is to bring efficiency to drug shortage reporting so the FDA can be better equipped to handle health crises in the future. But concerns persist that the scope of such requirements, along with the timelines for meeting them, are becoming too arduous.

• KHN: Readers And Tweeters Find Disadvantages In Medicare Advantage: With Medicare Advantage open enrollment open until Dec. 7, millions of seniors will consider costs, benefits and networks when selecting a new plan (“Medicare Plans’ ‘Free’ Dental, Vision, Hearing Benefits Come at a Cost,” Oct. 27). Many consumers may not be aware that some health plans have frustrating restrictions buried deep within that limit access to critical procedures. For example, Aetna recently began requiring prior authorization for cataract surgeries across all its health plans — including Medicare Advantage. Tens of thousands of Americans covered
by Aetna have had their sight-restoring surgeries delayed or canceled, while insurance company representatives decide who gets to see better — and who must wait for their cataract to get worse before insurance will cover cataract surgery.

- **The Hill: White House Expanding Health Care For Veterans Exposed To Burn Pits**: The White House on Thursday marked Veterans Day by announcing expanded health care resources for individuals exposed to burn pits and other environmental hazards during their time in the military. Assistance for those exposed to burn pits has been a personal issue for President Biden, who has on multiple occasions spoken about how he believes his son Beau Biden's exposure to them may have been linked to the brain cancer that killed him in 2015.

- **Bloomberg Government: Family Health Premiums Resume Fast Growth**: Annual family premiums for employer-sponsored health insurance rose 4% to average $22,221 in 2021, the Kaiser Family Foundation reported. Workers contributed $5,969 toward the cost of family coverage with employers paying the rest, the KFF reported in its 2021 employer benefits survey of nearly 1,700 large and small companies. The premium changes roughly match the 5% year-to-year rise in workers' wages. Inflation increased 1.9% over the same period, according to the data.

- **Modern Healthcare: Tenet's Outpatient Push Comes As CMS Moves The Other Way**: The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services may be slowing payment reforms designed to transition some procedures from inpatient to outpatient settings, but that isn't dimming confidence about Tenet Healthcare's investments in ambulatory surgical centers. Tenet's latest move, announced Monday, is its $1.2 billion acquisition of SurgCenter Development and that company's ownership stakes in 92 ambulatory surgical centers.

- **The Washington Post: Top Biden Health Officials Push To Make Coronavirus Booster Shots Available To All Adults**: Anxious about a surge of coronavirus infections enveloping Europe as cases tick up in the United States, senior health officials in the Biden administration are pressing urgently to offer vaccine booster shots to all adults. But support for the renewed push is not unanimous. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Rochelle Walensky has expressed caution about making extra shots so broadly available now, according to several officials familiar with the situation who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations. As a result, tension is rising among officials over how quickly to proceed and who should get the shots.

- **The Hill: Bloomberg Vows To Spend $120M To Fight Fatal Drug Overdoses**: Michael Bloomberg announced on Wednesday that his eponymous philanthropy is making a $120 million investment to help fight fatal drug overdoses. Bloomberg Philanthropies will invest $120 million over five-years in Kentucky, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina and Wisconsin to help address the opioid overdose crisis, according to a statement from the group. The organization said those five states represent areas that have been “hard hit” by the opioid epidemic. They will each receive $10 million over the next five years.