

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Thursday, November 14, 2019

(The following information comes from Bloomberg Government Website)

Schedules: White House and Congress

WHITE HOUSE

- 2pm: President Trump takes part in working visit of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg
- 4:10pm: Trump departs White House for Louisiana
 - 7:15pm: Arrives at Barksdale Air Force Base, La.
 - 7:35pm: Arrives at CenturyLink Center, Bossier City, La.
 - 8pm: Trump delivers remarks at campaign rally
 - 9:30pm: Departs Bossier City en route to Barksdale Air Force Base, La.
 - 9:50pm: Departs Barksdale en route to Washington
 - 12:30am: Trump arrives at the White House
- Vice President Mike Pence tours NASA's Ames Research Center, Moffett Field, Calif. at 1:30pm
 - Makes remarks at the center at 2:45pm
 - Departs for Washington at 4:05pm
- White House plans to release transcript of April call between Trump and Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskiy, Fox says

CONGRESS

- House meets at 10am: to begin consideration of H.R. 4863, a bill which would reauthorize the U.S. Export-Import Bank through Sept. 30, 2029 and rename it the U.S. Export Finance Agency
- Senate meets at 10am: Will resume post-cloture debate on nomination of Steven Menashi to the Second U.S. Circuit Court; confirmation vote at 1:45pm

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Obamacare Enrollment Down 21%:** Close to 800,000 people chose Obamacare plans in the federal HealthCare.gov exchange in the second week of open enrollment, the Department of Health and Human Services said. Plan selections from the beginning of open enrollment Nov. 1 through Nov. 9 in the 38 states using the federal exchange totaled more than 930,000, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services said yesterday. Open enrollment continues through Dec. 15
 - The success of open enrollment for 2020 may show whether the Trump administration's success in reducing premiums and attracting more insurers back to the market will pay off. Even with the modest premium

reductions, however, Obamacare plans remain very expensive for many people who don't receive substantial federal subsidies.

- **Drug Patents:** A bipartisan duo plans to bring to the Senate floor their bill to restrict drugmakers from gaming the patent process every week in hopes of putting pressure on their colleagues to address drug pricing. After a second unsuccessful attempt in as many weeks to get his bill (S. 1416) passed by unanimous consent – where the chamber can pass legislation if no one objects – Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas) said he will repeat the attempt “weekly, if not more often.”
 - Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) objected to passing the bill, saying he doesn't oppose the legislation but wants to first clear a larger package of health bills. He said on the Senate floor that Republicans like Cornyn block everything, “and his party blocks everything that would have far larger consequence.” Cornyn shot back in an interview that he'll keep bringing his bill to the floor to pressure Schumer to lift his hold: “His position is untenable.”
- **Republicans Come to Trump's Defense:** As the public phase of the inquiry gets under way, Republican allies of Trump have mounted an array of overlapping, and sometimes contradictory, arguments to defend him.
 - Testimony from administration officials has supported the contention that the White House held up aid to Ukraine to pressure that country to publicly announce an investigation of the president's top political rival. In response, the president's allies in the House and Senate have raised concerns about the process of the investigation, impugned the credibility of key witnesses and evidence and argued that the president's actions were routine.
- **Trump's Shadow Ukraine Policy Laid Bare:** The first public impeachment hearing laid out how a handful of loyalists led by Giuliani wrested control of U.S. policy from seasoned diplomats, all to achieve the president's political ends, and how it signaled the battles yet to come. The diplomats' remarks also offered the first full accounting of how Giuliani's efforts, which were fanned by Trump and began with a bid to fire the U.S. ambassador, eventually saw official policy toward Ukraine held hostage to the president's demands. It also showed how a number of officials raised alarms -- and were ignored -- about actions they believed undermined U.S. national security.
- **Pentagon IG Won't Open Probe:** The Pentagon inspector general has declined the request of Senate Democrats to open a probe into whether the Defense Department was negligent in delaying congressionally approved military aid to Ukraine, according to a letter. In the letter to senators, Inspector General Glenn Fine said “it is clear that there would be overlap in key witnesses and similar documents to review in any potential DOD IG investigation” with three House committees also investigating the hold on military aid that's at the center of the House's impeachment inquiry.

- **Ex-Im Bank Renewal Tests Trump's Sway:** Trump's push to reauthorize the Export-Import Bank for 10 years is facing headwinds on Capitol Hill, where lawmakers at both ends of the political spectrum are seeking to change or simply close the bank that finances overseas sales of U.S. products. The House today will begin consideration of legislation that would reauthorize the bank's lending authority through fiscal 2029. But that measure, which is expected to pass mostly along party lines, is likely to stall in the Republican-controlled Senate, testing Trump's sway with some members of his own party who oppose the bank.
- **N.Y. Judges Idle in Senate:** The all-out push by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) to fill judicial vacancies by year's end so far hasn't included many district court judges in the home states of top Democrats, particularly Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.).
 - In the nearly three years since Trump took office, McConnell has set up confirmation votes for more than 100 trial court judges, but only one in New York. The state has a dozen vacancies, a number of them considered emergency openings, and Trump has nominated replacements for most. By contrast, the Senate has since 2018 confirmed four district court nominees in McConnell's home state of Kentucky with the last one cleared in October, leaving no current vacancies there.
- **Deval Patrick Joins Crowded 2020 Democratic Presidential Race:** Former Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick joined the crowded 2020 Democratic presidential campaign Thursday amid growing concerns in the party that the existing field won't produce a nominee strong enough to beat Trump. Patrick, now the managing director of Bain Capital LP, announced in a video that he is running "to build a better, more sustainable, more inclusive American dream for the next generation." He's also expected travel to New Hampshire either Thursday or Friday before the filing deadline to get on the primary ballot there, according to two Democrats familiar with his plans.
- **Biden Proposes \$1.3 Trillion Infrastructure Plan:** Joe Biden today released a \$1.3 trillion proposal to make major investments in transportation with the dual goals of modernizing U.S. infrastructure and moving toward net-zero greenhouse gas emissions. The plan to "Invest in Middle Class Competitiveness" calls for spending over a 10-year period that would, according to the campaign, create millions of jobs.
 - It would target deficient transportation networks by, among other things, starting a "second great railroad revolution" and renovating the nation's airports. The plan also focuses on expanding options for Americans who do not have high-quality, reliable public transportation, specifically in high-poverty areas and historically marginalized communities.
- **Warren Says Big Business Shouldn't Worry:** Democratic presidential candidate Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) sought to reassure business leaders and investors they have

nothing to worry about if she is elected president -- as long as they obey the law. "I believe in markets. Markets with rules that are consistently enforced," she said in an interview in Concord, N.H. "If someone has built a business on cheating people, then they should be very worried about a Warren administration, but if that's not the case, then there's no reason for them to worry."

- Warren's progressive proposals for reducing inequality, including a wealth tax, breaking up big technology and agriculture companies, as well as her \$21 trillion plan to replace private health insurance with a government-run system, have raised concerns on Wall Street that her policies would be ruinous and push the U.S. too far to the left.
- **U.S., China Talks Stuck on Farm Purchases:** A U.S. demand that China detail how it plans to reach as much as \$50 billion in agricultural imports annually has become a sticking point in negotiations on a phase one trade deal, according to people familiar with the matter. Chinese negotiators are resisting a proposal from American officials that it provide monthly, quarterly and annual targets for purchases, said the people, who asked not to be named discussing the private talks. China also insists that the two sides must agree to roll back tariffs in phases if a deal is reached, the people said. Trump said earlier he had not agreed to ease any levies.
- **North Korean Human Rights Debate Sought:** The U.S. and allies are seeking to hold a United Nations Security Council debate on North Korea's human rights record after failing to do so last year, according to diplomats familiar with the discussions. France, the U.K., Germany and the U.S. want to hold the meeting on Dec. 10, during a month when the U.S. is slated to have the rotating presidency of the Security Council. Such a decision would risk angering Pyongyang officials just as Kim Jong Un's regime vows to pursue a "new path" if talks with the U.S. don't yield significant results by the end of the year.
- **Erdogan Says He Returned 'Fool' Letter:** Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says he personally returned a letter that Trump sent him last month, warning him against an offensive in northern Syrian before Turkey began its incursion. Trump's letter, dated Oct. 9, cautioned Erdogan not to be a "tough guy" or a "fool." Erdogan said in a joint news conference with Trump that he returned the letter at a meeting at the White House earlier yesterday. Trump didn't respond at the news conference.
- **Wolf Sworn in as DHS Chief:** Chad Wolf was installed yesterday as the acting secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. His ceremony happened swiftly after the Senate confirmed him for an undersecretary position at the department, which cleared a legal pathway in federal vacancy laws for him to be elevated to the leadership position.
 - House Homeland Security Chairman Bennie Thompson (D-Miss.) said in a statement that Wolf lacked the necessary experience, and called for the appointment of a permanent secretary. The top Democrat and Republican on the

Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee have also called for Trump to nominate a permanent secretary in recent days.

- Immigration hardliner Ken Cuccinelli will serve as senior official performing the duties of deputy secretary of DHS, according to an email from Wolf, obtained by Bloomberg Government. Cuccinelli is a former Virginia attorney general who has headed U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services since June.
 - Thompson in response said Trump “couldn’t fight the urge to play to his base by elevating Ken Cuccinelli to another senior leadership position at DHS that he is wholly unqualified for,” according to a statement. “I hope my colleagues in the Senate speak out and demand qualified nominees who can be confirmed to run the Department.”
- **Trump’s Request in Tax Case Denied:** A federal appeals court in Washington yesterday denied Trump’s request that it reconsider an earlier three-judge panel ruling refusing to quash a demand by House Democrats for records at Trump’s accountants Mazars USA. Congress issued the subpoena to Mazars in April as part of an investigation of whether to change ethics-in-government laws. Trump sued to block it, saying that the House Oversight and Reform Committee had no legitimate legislative reason to seek his records. Trump’s last recourse now is to go to the Supreme Court.