

# American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Monday, November 15, 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 participate in a tribal nations summit at the White House at 11:20 a.m. in connection with Native American Heritage Month.
- Biden will sign the bipartisan infrastructure bill into law at 3 p.m.
- The president will meet virtually at 7:45 p.m. with China President Xi Jinping.

### CONGRESS:

- The House meets at 2 p.m., with plans to consider five bipartisan veterans-related measures.
- The Senate at 5:30 will hold a procedural vote on Biden's pick for assistant secretary of the Treasury Department.

## Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Senate Set to Consider Defense Measure:** The Senate is likely to pick up the must-pass fiscal 2022 defense policy measure this week, Schumer said in a letter to colleagues yesterday.
  - The defense authorization bill is one of the few measures that Congress passes year after year. It's considered must-pass because it authorizes pay increases for troops as well as hazard pay. It also contains policies to compete against strategic challengers such as China and Russia.
- **The Wall Street Journal: Robert Califf, Former FDA Chief, Is Biden's Pick To Run Agency:** Robert Califf, a former Food and Drug Administration commissioner, is the Biden administration's choice to once again head the agency, as it plays a critical role in efforts to fight the Covid-19 pandemic. President Biden announced the nomination on Friday, sparking criticism among some lawmakers and patient advocates while a leading industry trade group leapt to his support. Dr. Califf is expected to be confirmed. The FDA, which has been clearing the use of Covid-19 vaccines, boosters and drugs, has been operating without a permanent leader since Mr. Biden took office.
- **Bloomberg Government: Biden Team Eases Nursing Home Visitation Limits:** Nursing home residents can once again receive visitors inside the facilities whenever they want after the Biden administration lifted Covid-19 visitation restrictions Friday. Noting the falling rates

of nursing home infections – and increasing staff vaccination rates – the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services said the time was right to let residents safely resume unrestricted visits.

- **Bloomberg Government: Biden Kills Trump-Era Rule for Life-Saving Devices:** The Biden administration on Friday rescinded a Trump-era rule that would have given medical device companies faster Medicare payments for life-saving products. CMS said in a statement it was taking the action “because of concerns that the provisions in the final rule may not have been sufficient to protect Medicare patients.”
- **The Wall Street Journal: Democrats Try To Heal Rifts, Pass \$2 Trillion Spending Bill:** House Democrats will return this week with the goal of passing a roughly \$2 trillion social spending and climate package. To be successful, members must remain united amid intraparty friction that some lawmakers say is the worst they have seen in their time in Congress. The tensions ramped up this month as Democrats worked to pass their separate \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill, which has been linked for months with the larger spending package. Party leaders emerged victorious on the infrastructure bill, but only because 13 Republicans brought it over the finish line after six Democrats voted no, protesting a decision to delay the social spending bill.
- **The Hill: Medicare Premiums To Jump In Part Due To Pricey Alzheimer's Drug:** Seniors on Medicare will have to pay more than \$20 more per month extra in premiums next year, a large increase that officials in part attributed to possible coverage of a pricey and controversial new Alzheimer's drug. The Biden administration announced Friday that the monthly premium for Medicare Part B, which covers services like doctors office visits, will increase by \$21.60, from \$148.50 in 2021 to \$170.10 in 2022. Officials said that is one of the largest increases in recent years.
- **Modern Healthcare: Biden Repeals Trump-Era Medicare 'Breakthrough' Coverage Policy:** The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services finalized its decision Friday to repeal a rule that would have created an expedited Medicare coverage pathway for medical devices considered "breakthrough technology." The rule, originally finalized in the last days of the Trump administration, would have allowed Medicare to cover devices deemed "breakthrough" by the Food and Drug Administration for four years once they received market authorization. Medicare beneficiaries can currently get breakthrough devices covered through other methods, like a national coverage determination, but this would have sped the process.
- **Crain's New York Business: Report: New York Hospitals Have Placed Thousands of Liens on Patients' Homes Over Bills:** Hospitals across New York have filed thousands of liens on the homes of patients with outstanding medical bills, according to a report released Wednesday by the Community Service Society of New York. Fifty-six New York hospitals placed 4,880 liens on patients' homes in 2017 and 2018, the most recent years for which data was available, the nonprofit found. Simultaneously, the hospitals received more than \$442 million in state funds meant to help them cover care for patients who are unable to pay, the report said.
- **Bloomberg Government: Democrats' Agenda Hangs on Budget Office's Work:** House Democrats working to advance this week their \$1.75 trillion tax and spending bill, which carries the drug pricing language, have balanced their legislative ambitions on an of ten

overworked group of experts with a smaller budget than even some D.C. think tanks. Key Democrats have said they want a Congressional Budget Office score of the party's major reconciliation bill before they vote on the bill in the House, but promised a vote no later than this week.

- That puts the heat on a small band of policy experts who are required to work around the clock when the congressional schedule heats up. The CBO released estimates for six of the 13 portions of the bill last week, though Director Phillip Swagel has yet to say how long the most difficult parts of the bill will take to analyze.