

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Tuesday, November 16, 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 give remarks at 2:25 p.m. at the NH 175 Bridge in Woodstock, N.H., on roads and bridges elements of the infrastructure measure he signed into law yesterday.
- The president is scheduled to return to the White House from New Hampshire at 6:25 p.m.

CONGRESS:

- The Senate is in at 10 a.m. to consider Biden's picks for assistant secretary at the Treasury Department and undersecretary of agriculture.
- The House also meets at 10 a.m., with plans to consider 13 bipartisan veterans-related bills under expedited floor procedure.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Moderates Expect Cost Estimates to Fall Short:** Two key House moderates said they anticipate official estimates by congressional scorekeepers of Biden's tax and spending plan might fall short of White House projections that it pays for itself, but they indicated that might not doom the measure.
 - Among the crucial differences expected between the Congressional Budget Office projections, which will be released by Friday, and the White House figures is how much money can be raised from increased tax enforcement.
 - "I think we're all well aware that there's going to be a discrepancy around the IRS piece and let's just reserve judgment until we see the whole package," Rep. Stephanie Murphy (D-Fla.) said. "I think it's really important that we don't draw red lines within the media."
 - Murphy, along with four other centrist Democrats, issued a statement earlier this month that they needed CBO data on the total cost of the legislation before they could vote on it. Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-N.J.), who also signed the statement, said he expects that the Internal Revenue Service enforcement revenue will fall short of the \$400 billion the White House has estimated, and that has been "baked into" his thinking. "We knew going in that that's something there will be a difference in," he told reporters last night.
- **Bloomberg Government: Medicaid, Medicare Overpaid Billions, Report Finds:** Federal health-care programs continue to shell out billions of dollars in improper overpayments each year, a new HHS report shows. Medicaid paid out nearly \$98.4 billion in overpayments from

July 2020 through June 2021, accounting for about 21.6% of total program reimbursements, the Department of Health and Human Services reported yesterday.

- **Bloomberg Government: House Energy & Commerce Announces Markup:** The House Energy & Commerce Committee announced a markup of 12 bipartisan bills tomorrow, including eight bills aimed at improving public health and supporting providers and patients, according to a press release.
- **Bloomberg Government: FDA Regains Diagnostic Test Oversight:** The Food and Drug Administration will have greater authority to ensure the reliability of at-home Covid-19 testing following the repeal of a Trump-era policy that directed the agency to not require pre-market reviews of tests developed in laboratories. Lab-developed tests, including ones administered at an urgent care center without being sent to a central lab, must now either get emergency or regular authorization before they're sold, the FDA said.
- **Modern Healthcare: Hospitals Can Share Space, Services Under Final CMS Guidance:** A hospital can be located on the same property or even in the same building as another hospital, so long as each entity can independently comply with Medicare and Medicaid program participation requirements, according to guidance the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services published Friday. The policy document provides answers to questions hospitals have asked for years and grants them more leeway than they had under previous federal guidance. The policy also applies to housekeeping, security, laboratories and other services at co-located facilities.
- **The New York Times: Biden Signs \$1 Trillion Infrastructure Bill Into Law:** The bill Mr. Biden signed will not address the nation's entire backlog of needed infrastructure investments, and it is not as ambitious as Mr. Biden's initial \$2.3 trillion proposal. The compromises that were necessary to win over a large group of Senate Republicans pared back the president's ambitions for investing in "human infrastructure" like home health care and fortifying the nation's physical infrastructure to fight and adapt to climate change. Still, administration officials and a wide range of outside economists and business groups largely agree that the package is the most important step in a generation toward upgrading critical infrastructure — and that it could soon begin to pay dividends for a wide range of businesses and people, from electric vehicle manufacturers to rural web surfers.
- **KHN: As Big Pharma And Hospitals Battle Over Drug Discounts, Patients Miss Out On Millions In Benefits:** In early July, as the covid-19 pandemic slammed rural America, the president of a small Kansas hospital sat down on a Friday afternoon and wrote the president of the United States to plead for help. "I do not intend to add to your burden," said Brian Williams, a retired Army lieutenant colonel and Desert Storm combat veteran. He said his hospital, Labette Health, was "like a war zone," inundated with unvaccinated patients. A department head had threatened to resign, saying he could not "watch one more body be carried out." But Williams wasn't seeking pandemic relief.
- **The Washington Post: Long Covid Symptoms Linger In 50 Percent Of People Who Survive The Disease:** At least 50 percent of people who survive covid-19 experience a variety of physical and psychological health issues for six months or more after their initial recovery, according to research on the long-term effects of the disease, published in the journal JAMA Network Open. Often referred to as "long covid," the adverse health effects vary from person

to person. But the research, based on data from 250,351 adults and children, found that more than half experience a decline in general well-being, resulting in weight loss, fatigue, fever or pain.

- **Fox News: New Study Gives Hope For Treatment Of PBC, The Silent Liver Disease:**

Primary Biliary Cholangitis (PBC) is an autoimmune disease where the small bile ducts of the liver become inflamed. The disease often goes undetected, potentially leading to scarring and cirrhosis of the liver, liver failure, and possibly death, hepatologists told Fox News. Patients with advanced stages of the disease who do not respond to other therapies may require a liver transplant, liver disease experts said. However, a recent report shows new hope for treatment. "PBC is a serious silent liver disease often misdiagnosed because of lack of knowledge in the medical community," Douglas Dieterich, M.D., a liver disease specialist and professor of medicine at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, explained to Fox News in an interview.