Schedules: White House and Congress

WHITE HOUSE:

- The president will visit General Motors’ Factory ZERO electric vehicle assembly plant in Detroit, Mich., to deliver remarks at 4:30 p.m. on electric vehicle provisions in the bipartisan infrastructure law.

- Biden is scheduled to return to the White House at 7:20 p.m.

CONGRESS:

- The Senate meets at 9:30 a.m. and will hold procedural votes on a Biden nominee and the annual defense policy bill.

- The House is in at 10 a.m. with plans to vote on a resolution that would censure Rep. Paul Gosar (R-Ariz.).

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Modern Healthcare: CMS Leaders Outline Vision For Medicaid, CHIP:** The Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services is developing a federal minimum standard for healthcare access and principles for Medicaid waivers and is working with states on improving eligibility redeterminations, according to senior agency officials. CMS Administrator Chiquita Brooks-LaSure and Center for Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program Services Director Daniel Tsai wrote a blog post for Health Affairs that categorizes the agency's agenda for these programs in three areas: expanding coverage and access, improving equity, and encouraging innovation.

- **KHN: Congressional Doctors Lead Bipartisan Revolt Over Policy On Surprise Medical Bills:** The detente that allowed Congress to pass a law curbing surprise medical bills has disintegrated, with a bipartisan group of 152 lawmakers assailing the administration’s plan to regulate the law and medical providers warning of grim consequences for underserved patients. For years, people have faced these massive, unexpected bills when they get treatment from hospitals or doctors outside their insurance company’s network. It often happens when patients seek care at an in-network hospital but a physician such as an emergency room doctor or anesthesiologist who treats the patient is not covered by the insurance plan. The insurer would pay only a small part of the bill, and the unsuspecting patient would be responsible for the balance.
• **Bloomberg Government: ‘Cures 2.0’ Bill Not Seen Passing This Year:** Reps. Diana DeGette (D-Colo.) and Fred Upton (R-Mich.) announced their long-awaited bill to speed up medical innovations and create a new federal research agency yesterday. But delays in its rollout mean the bill is unlikely to make it to President Joe Biden’s desk before the end of the year as they initially hoped, Upton said at a press conference yesterday. At the same time, DeGette said she expects this bill will take less time to pass compared to the 2016 law “because there is such an overwhelming support for the concept of it in both the Republican conference and the Democratic caucus.”

• **Modern Healthcare: Catching Up To Sci-Fi: Innovations In Transplant Care:** As a young trainee decades ago, Dr. Mikel Prieto, a transplant surgeon at Mayo Clinic, said the one-year success rate for a donor organ could be as low as 25%. Now most short-term success rates for organ transplants are in the 80s or 90s, he said. Although there are still issues of equity and access, organ transplantation has become safer and more routine due to major developments in the field.

• **Bloomberg Government: Lawmakers Tie Priorities to Year-End Bills:** A procedural vote today to expedite debate on the annual defense policy measure will kick into gear lawmakers’ push to tack their priorities onto must-pass spending bills before the end of the year.
  o The defense bill and a likely forthcoming spending package carrying 12 annual appropriations bills are primary targets for vehicles to complete other items, with little more than 20 scheduled workdays remaining.
  o Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) blazed the trail by telling lawmakers that with the tight schedule a $250 billion bill to spur U.S. competitiveness with China, help the semiconductor industry, and provide relief for the supply chain will be attached to the defense bill. Schumer said adding the competitiveness bill to the must-pass $740 billion defense bill is necessary to address a crisis. “Nothing will do more over the next few years to reduce supply chain problems than this bill, and especially in the semiconductor industry,” Schumer said yesterday on the Senate floor. “The chip shortage isn’t some abstract issue. It is impacting daily lives of America.”
  o Members of both parties are on board with the strategy as the clock ticks.

• **Modern Healthcare: Unsubstantiated Drug Price Hikes Cost $1.67B Last Year:** Pharmaceutical companies continue to increase the prices of their most profitable drugs despite minimal year-over-year improvements, according to a new report. Seven of the top 10 drugs that inflated U.S. healthcare spending in 2020 due to price increases did not offer substantial clinical benefits, the Institute for Clinical and Economic Review’s analysis found. The price hikes of those seven drugs increased healthcare spending by an estimated $1.67 billion last year, with AbbVie’s rheumatoid arthritis biologic accounting for $1.4 billion alone.

• **The Wall Street Journal: Pfizer Submits Covid-19 Pill For FDA Authorization:** “There is an urgent need for lifesaving treatment options,” Pfizer Chief Executive Albert Bourla said Thursday. “We are moving as quickly as possible in our effort to get this potential treatment into the hands of patients.” Health authorities and doctors have struggled with only a handful of options for treating Covid-19 patients, especially shortly after infection. A Gilead Sciences Inc. GILD -0.46% antiviral, remdesivir, is mostly used to treat hospitalized patients, while monoclonal antibody treatments have proven effective but are costly and typically given in doctor’s offices or hospitals.
Modern Healthcare: Telehealth May Prevent Detecting Drug Misuse, Providers Warn:
Three-fourths of physicians said they believe telemedicine visits limit their ability to
determine whether patients are at risk for or are currently misusing prescription drugs,
according to a new study. Providers are concerned that substance abuse issues are slipping
through the cracks in virtual care, as patients experience more stress and mental illness,
according to the 2021 Quest Diagnostics Health Trends report released in November.