American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Monday, November 23, 2020

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**

- President Trump, Vice President Mike Pence have no public events scheduled

**CONGRESS**

- House, Senate in recess
- Republican and Democratic leaders remain at odds over possible new stimulus

**Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News**

- **Bloomberg Government: Primary Care Centers See Long-Term Funding Delay:** The U.S.'s community health centers are bracing for another delay in long-term funding as Congress remains split over legislation to combat surprise medical billing. A five-year funding extension for the almost 1,400 federal community health centers and shorter extensions for a slate of other federal health programs have been held up, as talks bogged down over surprise billing legislation that would include those provisions. The centers largely offer primary care and serve one-fifth of the nation’s uninsured.

- **The Washington Post: Trump Administration Finalizes Rule That Could Make Thousands More Organs Available For Transplant:** The Trump administration has finalized major reforms in the way organs are collected and distributed for transplant, an effort aimed at making thousands more kidneys, livers, hearts and lungs available to the lengthy list of people waiting for them. The changes, announced Friday evening, are aimed primarily at “organ procurement organizations,” the government-chartered network of 58 nonprofits that collects organs from deceased donors and rushes them to surgeons at transplant centers.

- **Modern Healthcare: Trump's New Drug-Pricing Plan Overhauls Outpatient Drug Pay Starting Jan. 1:** The Trump administration is trying to overhaul some providers' payments for outpatient drugs in six weeks as it makes a last-ditch attempt to finalize drug-pricing policies that have languished in regulatory limbo. A model through the Center for Medicare and Medicare Innovation announced Friday would require mandatory participation from healthcare providers starting Jan. 1, 2021, though there are several categories of exceptions. The model would change providers' payment for administering drugs from a percentage of a drug's average sales price to a flat fee and tie reimbursement to prices charged in foreign countries

- **Bloomberg Government: The Biden Administration:** Biden intends to name his longtime adviser Antony Blinken as Secretary of State, according to three people familiar with the matter, setting out to assemble his cabinet even before Trump concedes.
In addition, Jake Sullivan, formerly one of Hillary Clinton’s closest aides, is likely to be named Biden’s national security adviser, and Linda Thomas-Greenfield will be nominated to serve as Biden’s ambassador to the United Nations. An announcement is expected tomorrow, the people said.

Biden plans to announce his first cabinet picks tomorrow, incoming White House Chief of Staff Ron Klain said yesterday. Klain, speaking on ABC’s “This Week,” didn’t specify which positions Biden plans to fill first, or the people who will be nominated. Biden has said he already decided on a Treasury Department secretary. “You’ll find it is someone who I think is, will be accepted by all elements of the Democratic Party,” Biden told reporters last Thursday.

Fed Governor Lael Brainard has slipped from among main contenders for Treasury Department secretary under Biden, people familiar with the matter said, as the president-elect’s team narrows its choices for major positions. Brainard, a favorite for the post before the election, had no contact with the transition team since Biden won, people familiar with the matter said. Chances are now increasing that the president-elect could turn to former Federal Reserve Chairwoman Janet Yellen to lead the Treasury Department.

Biden’s transition team is also weighing attorney general contenders led by Lisa Monaco, who held senior national security jobs in the Obama administration, and Sally Yates, who gained fame when she was fired by Trump, according to people familiar with the matter. The choice of either would help Biden achieve his goal of having women represented at the highest levels of his administration.

- **Bloomberg Government: Mnuchin Moves to Restart Aid Talks**: Treasury Secretary Mnuchin is bidding to revive stalled pandemic relief talks with congressional Democrats by proposing the use of untapped Federal Reserve relief money as part of a new package. He and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) discussed the stimulus strategy Friday in the first sign in weeks of potential movement on a fiscal stimulus in the waning days of the Trump presidency. McConnell backed the proposal to use $580 billion allocated for Federal Reserve loan guarantees, small business aid and other aid programs that is unspent.

- **Bloomberg Government: Vaccine Breakthroughs Put Covid Protection Within Reach**: Results from vaccine trials are the most promising steps yet in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic. Pfizer and BioNTech have sought an emergency use authorization for their vaccine after a study showed it was 95% effective, with one from Moderna achieving similar results, according to a preliminary trial analysis. The shot from AstraZeneca Plc and its partner, the University of Oxford, stopped an average of 70% of participants from falling ill. Despite the apparently lower efficacy, the British vaccine has some advantages when it comes to distribution.

- **Bloomberg Government: Covid-19 Hospitalizations Jump 36% in Eight Days**: Covid-19 hospitalizations accelerated in the U.S., with coronavirus cases now accounting for almost a quarter of patients in South Dakota and New Mexico, government data show. The U.S., which recorded 177,552 new infections on Saturday, is now averaging almost 110,000 more
daily cases than a month ago. The country had 84,401 Covid-19 inpatients as of Nov. 19, a 36% increase in eight days.

- **Bloomberg Government: Biden Eyes Wider Use of Defense Law to Boost PPE:** Manufacturers of personal protective equipment for the fight against the coronavirus may face fresh orders to boost supplies and greater federal oversight of where those goods get sent once Biden takes office. Hospitals in the U.S. are clamoring for additional personal protective equipment amid surging new cases even after major increases to domestic production by manufacturers like 3M and Honeywell.