

# American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Wednesday, November 3, 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 returned overnight from the United Nations COP26 climate change summit in Glasgow, Scotland.
- He is scheduled to receive his daily briefing at 1 p.m., and has no public events scheduled.

### CONGRESS:

- The House plans to meet at noon with votes planned on 11 bills under expedited floor procedure and possible consideration of a bill to protect older workers from age-based discrimination.
- The Senate is in at 10 a.m. to continue work on nominees to serve in the Biden administration. This afternoon, the chamber will hold a procedural vote on a elections and voting measure from Democrats that is unlikely to garner enough Republican support to advance.

## Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Modern Healthcare: CMS To Boost Pay For Home Health, Hospital Outpatient Services:** The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services is boosting payment for hospital outpatient services and home health and reducing reimbursement for physicians next year, according to a trio of final rules published Tuesday. Hospital-owned outpatient and ambulatory surgery center payment rates will each increase by 2%. Medicare home health reimbursement rates will increase by 2.6%, which the CMS expects to increase payments by \$465 million. The agency will reduce the physician fee schedule conversation factor by \$1.30 to \$33.59 as the temporary reimbursement boost provided by the Consolidated Appropriations Act expires. But the CMS is expanding reimbursement for telehealth services that treat mental health issues.
- **Politico: ‘A Massive Step Forward’: Democrats Clinch Drug Pricing Deal:** Democrats on Tuesday announced an agreement on drug pricing reform, coming out in favor of allowing Medicare Part D to negotiate directly with pharmaceutical companies for the first time since its creation, a move the drug industry has fought for nearly two decades. While the latest proposal is far weaker than the version passed twice by the House, even staunch progressives in both chambers are preparing to accept that it’s likely the best they’re able to get in the narrowly divided Congress.

- Modern Healthcare: Democrats Target Hospitals In Medicaid Expansion Holdout States With DSH Cuts:** House Democrats are taking a new approach to convince recalcitrant conservative states to expand Medicaid to low-income adults: threatening funding cuts to hospitals. Under an updated version of the domestic policy package that the House may consider as soon as this week, hospitals in states that don't expand Medicaid could face a 12.5% cut in funding meant to help hospitals that serve large numbers of Medicaid patients. These so-called disproportionate share hospital payments are intended to keep safety net facilities financially stable by offsetting Medicaid's low payment rates and helping cover uncompensated care costs.
- Bloomberg Government: Medicare to Let Doctors' 3.75% Pandemic Pay Bump Expire:** Medicare payments to cardiologists, radiation oncologists, and numerous other medical specialty providers will take a hit in 2022 after the Biden administration allowed a temporary 3.75% payment hike in 2021 to expire next year. In the 2022 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule final rule released yesterday, (RIN 0938-AU42), the multiplier – or “conversion factor” used to determine provider reimbursement in traditional Medicare – drops to \$33.59 next year from \$34.89 in 2021. That erases the 3.75% increase awarded in 2021 under the Consolidated Appropriations Act to “provide relief during the COVID-19 public health emergency.”

  - o As a result, “several specialties, including interventional radiology, vascular surgery, radiation oncology, and cardiology,” will see their Medicare reimbursements decrease next year, while other specialty providers like “diagnostic testing facilities, portable x-ray, podiatry, hand surgery, and geriatrics” will see payment increases, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services said.
- The Wall Street Journal: Hospitals Face Steeper Fines For Shunning Federal Price-Disclosure Rules:** The Biden administration on Tuesday finalized a regulation that will sharply increase the financial penalties for larger hospitals that don't make their prices public. The new rule, which will take effect at the start of 2022, will also crack down on practices that made hospitals' prices hard to find and access, including the use of special coding embedded in hospital webpages that prevents Alphabet Inc.'s GOOG 1.45% Google and other search engines from displaying price pages in search results.
- Bloomberg Government: CDC Gives Go-Ahead for Pfizer's Pediatric Covid Vaccine:** Younger children across the U.S. are now eligible to receive Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine, after the head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention granted the final clearance needed for shots to begin. CDC Director Rochelle Walensky recommended the vaccine for children from 5 to 11 years old. The decision ushers in a new phase in the U.S. pandemic response, widening vaccine access to some 28 million more people at the same time that Americans who received shots earlier in the pandemic are lining up for booster doses.