

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Thursday, November 4, 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

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Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **The Wall Street Journal: House Democrats Add Paid Leave, State-And-Local Tax Deduction To Bill:** House Democrats released an updated version of the party's social spending and climate package, adding back a paid-leave program that had previously fallen out of the bill and including a measure sharply raising the \$10,000 cap on the state and local tax deduction. The House bill, which top Democrats want to bring up to a vote in the chamber soon, is the latest proposal in the months-long negotiations among Democrats over President Biden's agenda. But it is set to face changes in the Senate, where Sen. Joe Manchin (D., W. Va.) has objected to the inclusion of a paid-leave benefit.
- **Drug Price Deal Hailed by Employers:** Employers view the drug pricing deal by congressional Democrats as an important "foot in the door" even though they won't benefit from a provision allowing Medicare to negotiate some of the highest-priced drugs.
 - The agreement allowing the government to negotiate prices on a small number of expensive drugs is "an important first step," in making drug prices affordable for workers and their employers, Bill Kramer, executive director for health policy with the Purchaser Business Group on Health (PBGH), said in an interview. "We've broken through the fortress wall that pharma has erected over decades, and this is the first time we've been able to get through with anything."
 - Still, Kramer added, "We have a long way to go in order to get drug prices that are affordable for the payers and their workers and families." The PBGH represents 40

private employers and public entities across the U.S. spending about \$100 billion a year to cover more than 15 million workers and families.

- Employers had lobbied heavily to be allowed to take advantage of any lower prices that Medicare negotiates. Although not successful on that front, they were encouraged by other provisions in the Democrats' agreement.
- **KHN: Uninsured In South Would Win Big In Democrats' Plan, But Hospitals Fear Funding Loss:** At least 2.2 million low-income adults – nearly all in Texas and the Southeast – would be eligible for government-funded health insurance under the Democrats' \$1.75 trillion social spending and climate change plan. That's the number of people who are eligible for Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act but have been left uninsured because they live in one of the dozen states that have not expanded coverage under the 2010 law. They are in the coverage gap – with incomes too high to qualify for Medicaid, but below the \$12,880 annual federal income minimum for an individual to qualify for subsidized coverage in the insurance marketplaces created by the ACA.
- **The Washington Post: Democrats' Drug-Price Deal Leaves Some Unsatisfied:** Democrats are touting a historic deal that would for the first time cap seniors' out-of-pocket drug costs and empower Medicare to negotiate some prices with drugmakers, arguing it sets a precedent after decades of failures to curb spending that has frustrated consumers. But patient advocates and industry analysts are raising questions about the compromise, which significantly pares back proposals that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) had pushed for months and offers a reprieve to a deep-pocketed drug industry.
- **The Washington Post: After Loss In Virginia, Democrats Look To Speed Up Their Stalled \$3 Trillion Spending Agenda:** A new sense of political urgency swept over restive Democrats from the White House to Capitol Hill on Wednesday, as they raced to resolve the final issues stalling President Biden's roughly \$3 trillion economic agenda in the aftermath of a stinging election defeat in Virginia. With a loss in the state's gubernatorial race – along with a slim win for the Democratic incumbent in New Jersey – party lawmakers found themselves anxious, exasperated and newly ready to try to advance two spending initiatives that have been bogged down in Congress for months.
- **AP: Hospitals Lose More Nurses After Federal Contract Expires:** Mississippi health care providers say they may have to close floors and reduce patient beds after losing hundreds of nurses due to the recent expiration of a federal contract put in place to help the state battle the coronavirus pandemic. During the last wave of COVID-19, 900 nurses were deployed to hospitals across the state under a 60-day contract funded by the federal government. That contract expired Nov. 1 and the number of virus cases has subsided since the summer peak.
- **Bloomberg Government: Health Care Clings to Faxes Amid Electronic Records Push:** Health IT pros and federal regulators dream of a health-care system in which the flow of information happens seamlessly through a simple mouse-click, with just the right data flowing in an instant to just the right provider in just the right form. But getting to health IT nirvana will mean dealing with the fax machine – and with the limitations of current tech that make fax machines necessary. At least 70% of health-care providers still exchange medical information by fax, according to federal officials.