Schedules: White House and Congress

WHITE HOUSE

• The Labor Department this morning will release employment figures for October. The report is forecast to show the U.S. added 450,000 workers to payrolls last month, which would be the most since July. The report comes at a time of more worker upheaval than the country has seen in decades. Biden plans to deliver remarks on the report at 10:15 a.m.

• Biden will then attend the funeral of former Secretary of State Colin Powell at the Washington National Cathedral at 12 p.m.

• The president is scheduled to spend the weekend in Rehoboth Beach, Del.

CONGRESS:

• The House returns at 8 a.m., with scheduled votes on the bipartisan infrastructure bill and Democrats’ tax and spending.

• The Senate plans a pro forma session today, but no business is scheduled. There are no committee events scheduled.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

• AP: Biden's Big Bill On Brink Of House Votes, But Fights Remain: Democrats in the House appear on the verge of advancing President Joe Biden’s $1.85 trillion-and-growing domestic policy package alongside a companion $1 trillion infrastructure bill in what would be a dramatic political accomplishment — if they can push it to passage. The House scrapped votes late Thursday but will be back at it early Friday, and White House officials worked the phones to lock in support for the president’s signature proposal. After months of negotiations, House passage of the big bill would be a crucial step, sending to the Senate Biden’s ambitious effort to expand health care, child care and other social services for countless Americans and deliver the nation’s biggest investment yet to fight climate change.

• Modern Healthcare: Home Health Sector Glad CMS Didn't Finalize Pay Adjustment Method: Home health providers are counting CMS’ decision not to finalize methods for keeping the payment system for home health agencies budget neutral as a win, though they’re still disappointed that CMS decided to move forward with a 4.36% cut for the third year in its final 2022 payment rule. CMS began the Patient-Driven Groupings Model for home health agencies last year, aiming to cut down on unnecessary therapies and instead emphasize
patient characteristics. PDGM also changed the case-mix system and switched to reimbursing agencies based on 30-day periods.

- **Bloomberg Government: Pelosi signed off on a change to the SALT deduction provisions in Biden’s economic agenda**: Instead of moving forward with a proposal to lift the $10,000 cap on state and local tax deductions to $72,500 through 2031, the bill will now raise it to $80,000 through 2030, a person familiar with the negotiations said. The cap would snap back to $10,000 in 2031. Compared to current law where there is no cap after 2025, the provision would raise $14.8 billion in revenue over 10 years.

- **Bloomberg Government: Democrats agreed to give some drugs an extra year of exemption from their proposed drug price negotiations** after party moderates sought changes, according to a person familiar with the matter. The move means biologic drugs won’t face government negotiation until 13 years post approval, one year longer than previously agreed to. Small molecule drugs remain at nine years post-approval until negotiation. The change was made after Reps. Scott Peters (D-Calif.) and Kathleen Rice (D-N.Y.) met with Pelosi.

- **Modern Healthcare: Industry Has Questions, Concerns About CMS Vaccine Mandate**: Industry stakeholders lauded the intent of COVID-19 vaccine rules released Thursday morning by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, but many still have lingering concerns, particularly about whether the requirements will lead to more healthcare workers leaving an already tight labor market. Meanwhile, Republican state officials immediately indicated they’re planning to sue the federal government over the OSHA rule, a move that’s been expected since the Biden administration announced it would require the two agencies to put out COVID-19 vaccine policies in September. The legal battle could begin as soon as Friday.

- **Bloomberg Government: GOP Warns Safety-Net Hospitals Face Cuts**: Republican lawmakers took aim at a Democratic proposal in Biden’s agenda that would expand Medicaid in a dozen holdout states, saying it means deep cuts for safety-net hospitals. At issue are proposed cuts in disproportionate share hospital payments, also known as DSH payments. The funds support hospitals that provide a large amount of care to Medicaid patients and the uninsured, for which they receive no payment or less than the full cost of services provided.
  - “In order to strong-arm Medicaid expansion on the whole country Democrats are threatening the lives of patients who rely on care from hospitals in these 12 states,” Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-Wash.), ranking member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, said at a Health Subcommittee markup of a slate of unrelated bills.
  - The cuts could be as much as $7.8 billion over 10 years, according to the American Hospital Association and other hospital groups that are urging the congressional leaders to remove them from the bill.

- **Bloomberg Government: House Bills Address Doctors’ Mental Health**: The federal government would start a campaign to combat physician suicide and improve the mental health of health-care providers stressed by the nearly two-year-long pandemic, under nine bills advanced yesterday by the House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee. The subcommittee approved the slate of public health bills that largely authorize grants to open programs to support health-care providers and researchers, including one (H.R. 1667) for mental and behavioral health training for doctors.
The Dr. Lorna Breen Health Care Provider Protection Act was passed the Senate in August and would be a rare effort by lawmakers to deal with deaths by suicide among providers. Breen was a long-time New York emergency room physician who died by suicide in April 2020, after spending weeks treating Covid-19 patients, then contracting the virus herself. Lawmakers have cited her story as evidence of increased burnout and stress among health-care providers dealing with the pandemic, which has killed over 750,000 people in the U.S. since the start of 2020.

The bill and eight others were sent to the full Energy and Commerce Committee for markup. If approved by the full committee, they can go to the House floor for a vote. “America’s health care workers have been and continue to face a deadly crisis,” Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-Calif.), chair of the subcommittee, said.