

# American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Thursday, December 10, 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

- 12:45pm: President Trump has lunch with around a dozen state attorneys general
- 8:15pm: Trump delivers remarks at Congressional Ball

### CONGRESS

- Senate meets at 10am; set to resume consideration of NDAA
- House meets at 9am; first votes expected 10:30am
  - Set to consider 8 bills including a measure that would order the removal of a statue of Robert E. Lee at the Antietam National Battlefield near Sharpsburg, Md.
- 10:45am: House Speaker Nancy Pelosi holds weekly press conference
- 10am: House Oversight subcommittee holds hearing on presidential transitions

## Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Covid-19 Relief Deal Delayed with Pelosi, McConnell Holding Back:** Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) have given no sign yet that they're ready to directly engage in negotiations to sort through competing pandemic relief proposals -- a step that many lawmakers say will be necessary to complete a deal this month.
  - The Senate GOP leader is now on board with a \$916 billion proposal released Tuesday by Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, while the House speaker sees a rival \$908 billion plan still being drafted by a bipartisan group of lawmakers as the best path to a deal to aid the struggling U.S. economy. Their positioning shows consensus emerging on an overall price tag. But the proposals differ on key features. Although their proxies are engaged in negotiations, the top congressional leaders haven't yet planned a tete-a-tete to resolve the outstanding issues.
- **Bloomberg Government: Doctors Build Bipartisan Support to Block Medicare Cut:** Nearly 330 lawmakers are moving to stop new Medicare physician payment cuts from taking effect on New Year's Day, with bipartisan support building to include such a provision in the year-end spending package. House and Senate members from both parties have either co-sponsored legislation or written to their leadership or HHS, seeking to stop the Medicare payment cuts in the 2021 Medicare physician fee schedule, according to the Surgical Care Coalition. The planned rate reductions are due to budget neutrality provisions in the Medicare Act that require program payment hikes be offset by equal reductions elsewhere.

- **Bloomberg Government: Electronic Health Data Standards:** The House is set to consider under expedited procedure today a bill (H.R. 7898) that would clarify the Department of Health and Human Services inspector general's authority to investigate technology developers and health-care providers that impede access to electronic health information. It would require HHS to consider whether health-care entities have recognized cybersecurity practices in place when it determines fines and audits related to data standards
- **Bloomberg Government: Fall Regulatory Plan Debuts Before Biden's Inauguration:** A long list of regulations federal agencies had planned to advance or cut over the next year was released yesterday by the White House Office of Management and Budget, even though agency priorities will change as President-elect Joe Biden is sworn in on Jan. 20. The fall agenda included a number of new proposals or revised timelines for completion of rules. Among them:
  - The Health and Human Services Department is planning to propose a rule in January to "robustly address" unlawful discrimination on the basis of disability.
  - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is planning to issue an interim final rule in May 2021 to set new performance standards for fit tests for face masks.
- **Associated Press: Pfizer COVID-19 Vaccine Faces Last Hurdle Before US Decision:** The FDA panel functions like a science court that will pick apart the data and debate – in public and live-streamed – whether the shot is safe and effective enough to be cleared for emergency use. The non-government experts specialize in vaccine development, infectious diseases and medical statistics. The FDA is expected to follow the committee's advice, although it is not required to do so.
- **Associated Press: Trump Tries to Revive Stalled Election-Eve Drug Discounts:** The Trump administration is trying to revive the president's stalled election-eve plan to send millions of Medicare recipients a \$200 prescription discount card. A person familiar with the effort tells The Associated Press that government agencies still face legal questions about the plan. That's on top of the daunting logistics of sending an estimated 39 million people a functional card in the midst of the holiday season without the benefit of much advance planning. The person was not authorized to publicly discuss internal deliberations and spoke on condition of anonymity.
- **Modern Healthcare: Healthcare Was The Hardest Hit By Supply Shortages Across All U.S. Industries:** The healthcare industry was the hardest hit by supply shortages, new data on the U.S. economy show. That was one of the findings from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' survey of nearly 600,000 U.S. businesses gathered from mid-July through September. The results illustrate the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on businesses based on size, location and industry. Sixty-four percent of healthcare companies reported a shortage of supplies or inputs. Retail trade and accommodation and food services were the next hardest hit sectors at 59% and 50%, respectively. The national average across all industries was 36%.
- **New England Journal of Medicine: Effect Of Finerenone On Chronic Kidney Disease Outcomes In Type 2 Diabetes:** Finerenone, a nonsteroidal, selective mineralocorticoid receptor antagonist, reduced albuminuria in short-term trials involving patients with

chronic kidney disease (CKD) and type 2 diabetes. However, its long-term effects on kidney and cardiovascular outcomes are unknown.

- **Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy: Universal Flu Vaccine Found Safe, Immune-Producing in Phase 1 Trial:** Universal flu vaccine candidates created with chimeric hemagglutinin (cHA) produced a broad immune response for 1.5 years, reports a study yesterday in *Nature Medicine*. Traditional flu vaccines target the virus' head of hemagglutinin (HA), but some researchers hope that creating a vaccine that targets the less-frequently mutating stalk will provide longer and broader protection. The researchers were able to sidestep issues of the virus's immunodominant head by using first H8 then H5 HA viral heads in their vaccination sequence, both with the same H1 HA stalk. Past studies have shown that by using the same stalk but different heads in vaccination regimens, subjects receive rising levels of immunity to the stalk itself. Most adults have already been primed at least once for the H1 stalk through previous exposure.