

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Tuesday, December 15, 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 has no public events scheduled
- VP Mike Pence travels to Bloomington, Ind. to tour Catalent, hold roundtable discussion on Operation Warp Speed

CONGRESS

- Senate meets at 10am; resumes consideration of judicial nominees
- House meets at 3pm for pro forma session

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Lawmakers Rush to Complete Relief Before Break:** Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) face pressure to allow a vote on a Covid-19 assistance plan without the aid for states they've said is vital, after a bipartisan group split that and liability protections from other relief spending. With the congressional session winding down and a government funding package needed by Friday, time is running out for an agreement on the two most contentious and partisan pandemic-relief issues -- Covid-19 liability protections for employers and aid for state and local governments.
 - That makes today a potentially crucial day for the congressional leadership to establish the contours of a possible deal as record numbers of Americans die from the coronavirus and the economic rebound falters.
 - A bipartisan group of lawmakers yesterday released a \$908 billion pandemic relief package that may provide momentum for breaking the months-long impasse by separating out coronavirus liability protections and state relief, the two most contentious and partisan items.
 - After Republicans and Democrats failed to strike consensus on a liability shield for businesses, the group that's been working on a bipartisan compromise released two separate legislative proposals. One is for \$748 billion and includes areas of accord like vaccine funding and small businesses relief, and the other wraps the two most contentious items, including \$160 billion for regional authorities.
 - Senate Minority Whip Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), one of the negotiators, said state and local aid and liability are both "critically" important, but said Pelosi and McConnell should allow votes on the \$748 consensus measure soon. He said the aid it carries is "desperately needed."
 - "This is our consensus bill. We all agree on it. It's ready to go. There's no excuse for either the speaker or the leader," Durbin added. "You've got to give us a vote. Don't let us go home for Christmas without a vote on this."

- Politico: Trump's Drug Cards Clear Key Hurdle Following Pressure From White House:** President Donald Trump's stalled campaign promise to send \$200 drug-discount cards to seniors has new life after an obscure-but-important industry panel on Monday night gave its blessing, ending weeks of resistance to the plan. The Trump administration has been trying to revive the Medicare discount cards after the plan, abruptly announced in September, ran into resistance inside the administration over questions about its cost and legality. But as POLITICO reported last week, a new hurdle had recently emerged: an industry consortium that helps the Internal Revenue Service oversee benefit cards balked at the plan, raising concerns that Trump's promised, one-time drug discounts didn't meet typical standards for health-benefit cards.
- The Wall Street Journal: Joe Biden Officially Captures Enough Electoral Votes To Win Presidency:** The Electoral College meetings took less than an hour in most states, and there were no electors who didn't back the total-vote winner of their state. Added security measures were adopted by some states amid a tense national political climate and Covid-19 restrictions. Nevada conducted its meeting via video conference, and many electors elsewhere wore masks. Some states placed limits on the number of guests electors could bring, while others moved the meetings to larger spaces to better accommodate social distancing.
- Bloomberg Government: Surprise Billing Sticking Point on Omnibus:** The inclusion of surprise billing provisions in omnibus spending negotiations remains an open item in the deal that Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) is pushing to close. Drew Hammill, a spokesman and deputy chief of staff to Pelosi in a tweet yesterday said the Speaker discussed the measure last night with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin. Lawmakers have until Friday night to wrap up the annual government funding package.
- Bloomberg Government: CVS, Walgreens Gear Up for Nursing Home Vaccination:** Residents and staff at nursing homes and other long-term care facilities can expect widespread Covid-19 vaccinations to begin in earnest next week as CVS and Walgreens ramp up efforts to provide the lifesaving immunizations inside facilities hit hardest by the pandemic. The first CVS nursing home clinics providing the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine are expected to begin Dec. 21, said Derek Darling, vice president for strategy, marketing and internal operations at Omnicare, a CVS Health company.
- The Washington Post: DHS, State And NIH Join List Of Federal Agencies – Now Five – Hacked In Major Russian Cyberespionage Campaign:** The Department of Homeland Security, the State Department and the National Institutes of Health on Monday joined the list of known victims of a months-long, highly sophisticated digital spying operation by Russia whose damage remains uncertain but is presumed to be extensive, experts say. The list of victims of the cyberespionage, which already included the Treasury and Commerce departments, is expected to grow and to include more federal agencies and numerous private companies, said officials and others familiar with the matter, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because it is under investigation.
- Bloomberg: FDA Approves Pig Genomic Alteration For Human Therapeutics Use:** The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved a genomic alteration in pigs that could reduce potential allergic reactions when porcine materials are used for medical purposes in humans, the agency said Monday in a statement. FDA said the intentional genomic alteration, or IGA, was the first of its kind and allows for pigs raised with it to be consumed as food and for therapeutic uses. The alteration "is intended to eliminate alpha-gal sugar on the surface of the pigs' cells," the FDA said. Those with Alpha-gal syndrome

(AGS) can have mild to severe allergic reactions to it in red meat such as pork, beef or lamb.