

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Monday, December 16, 2019

(The following information comes from Bloomberg Government Website)

Schedules: White House and Congress

WHITE HOUSE

- 12:45pm: President Trump has lunch with Vice President Mike Pence
- 2pm: Trump participates in governors' roundtable on regulation, with Pence
- 4:15: Trump and First Lady Melania Trump participate in Christmas reception

CONGRESS

- House meets at 2pm; no votes expected
- Senate meets at 3pm; at 5:30pm will proceed to a vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the defense policy bill conference report
- At least six aides working for Rep. Jeff Van Drew, a first-term Democrat from New Jersey who opposes impeachment and is expected to become a Republican later this week, resigned over the weekend.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **McConnell's Post-Impeachment Agenda:** Senate Republicans are beginning to lay out plans to move quickly from Trump's likely January trial to a roster of bills they hope will resonate with voters in an election year. Stiff-arming Democrats' allegations that he's turned the chamber into a "legislative graveyard," Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) is ready to shift his focus away from Trump's nominees to an agenda that will have lawmakers once again voting on committee-reported bills, Republicans said.
 - Senate Republican Conference Chairman John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) said McConnell has started talks with Republican chairs this week about the bills that he can begin bringing up soon after the impeachment trial ends. Barrasso said legislation that might be brought up early next year includes a bill from Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) to tackle surprise medical billing. Also under discussion are bills on drug prices, others said, though a comprehensive drug-pricing bill from Finance Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) hasn't won McConnell's endorsement.
- **Senate Democrats Demand White House Testimony:** Democrats demanded that members of the Trump administration testify in the Senate impeachment trial, in a letter sent last night from Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) to Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.). Schumer laid out detailed proposals for the impeachment trial, which he said should start on Jan. 9 after "pre-trial housekeeping measures" are adopted Jan. 6, and follow a similar structure to the 1999 trial of President Bill Clinton.

- Acting White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney and former National Security Adviser John Bolton were among those named by Schumer.
- **Comey 'Overconfident' in Approving Trump Probe:** James Comey, the former FBI director, agreed yesterday with the conclusions of an independent investigator that found flaws in the agency's decision to probe individuals in Trump's 2016 presidential campaign. "He's right, I was wrong," Comey, who was fired by Trump in May 2017, said on "Fox News Sunday." "I was overconfident, as director, in the procedures that the FBI and Justice have built over 20 years." It was the first television interview by Comey since last Monday's release of the Justice Department inspector general's report into how the FBI came in 2016 to investigate people associated with Trump's campaign.
- **Trump Gets High Court Review on Financial Records:** The Supreme Court on Friday agreed to consider Trump's efforts to keep his financial and tax records secret, setting up a major constitutional and political showdown in the middle of next year's election campaign. The justices said they'll hear three appeals from Trump that challenge subpoenas from Congress and a New York grand jury and raise sweeping questions about investigations into alleged misconduct by the president. Trump is asking the court to sharply limit Congress's powers and give the president immunity from state criminal probes while in office.
- **Appropriations Bill Anticipated:** Lawmakers face an end-of-week deadline to continue funding the government. A deal was announced last week, and a potential vote is listed for action in the House this week, but appropriators have yet to release the text of the spending legislation. They plan to do so by noon today. House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) has said he hopes to hold votes tomorrow on the bills. Lawmakers expect the 12-bill deal to be split into at least two packages.
- **Congress Mulls Reviving Tax Breaks:** Lawmakers led by Senate Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) are negotiating a potential revival of expired tax breaks in last-minute negotiations over a government spending bill. The talks, which were held on Saturday, are focused on reinstating the tax extenders, a move that could be a boon to the biofuel, alcoholic beverage and short-line railroad industries that were hoping to see renewal of valuable credits and deductions, according to a person familiar with the discussions.
- **North American Trade:** Mexico's top trade negotiator took to Twitter yesterday to drive home his objections to the congressional proposal to create multiple U.S. labor attaches to monitor implementation of the free trade deal with the U.S. and Canada. Jesus Seade also wrote to his U.S. counterpart, Robert Lighthizer, this weekend expressing "surprise and concern" over the inclusion of the labor overseers as part of the bill that ratifies the implementation of the agreement.
 - The White House sent legislation to implement the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement to Congress Friday. Under U.S. trade law procedures, the bill cannot

be amended. The House Ways and Means Committee is expected to report it out tomorrow and the full House will vote on Thursday. White House economic director Larry Kudlow predicted on Fox News yesterday that the deal would pass the House “handily.”

- Seade is expected to meet with Lighthizer and U.S. lawmakers in Washington today.
- **Curbing Climate Gases:** Congressional backers of a curb on super-polluting hydrofluorocarbons tried but failed to add the measure to the U.S.-Mexico-Canada trade deal. The language to cut hydrofluorocarbons was in line with a global deal struck in 2016 with strong support from the Obama administration, but never sent to the Senate for ratification.
- **Democrats Seek Otting Testimony:** Senate Banking Committee Democrats are seeking Office of the Comptroller of Currency chief Joseph Otting’s testimony on a proposal to overhaul the Community Reinvestment Act. The revisions would have “significant impact on low-income communities, communities of color, rural areas, affordable housing development, community development, and other underserved communities and activities across the banking system,” said ranking member Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) and others in a letter to Otting.
- **New Jersey Democrat Mulls Switch:** Rep. Jeff Van Drew (D-N.J.), who opposed opening an impeachment inquiry, may abandon his party as soon as next week to join the Republicans, the New York Times reported. Van Drew has talked with top advisers to Trump about securing the president’s support for the switch to the GOP, which may help him avert a primary challenge next year, the Times reported, citing two Democrats and a Republican.
- **Impeachment Vote Tests for Vulnerable Democrats:** The year-old Democratic majority in the U.S. House faces its toughest test now that the chamber has locked in a vote on impeaching Trump. It’s a step that many moderates in the party had hoped to avoid. The Democrats who flipped Republican seats in 2018 to give Pelosi her gavel have helped pass more than 400 pieces of legislation in the House this year. But it’s a vote on historic articles of impeachment that could define their 2020 campaigns and their political careers.
- **Impeachment Drama Not Changing Minds:** The televised drama that’s gripped Washington and parts of the nation over the past month has done little to change public opinion about Trump and impeachment, according to two polls released yesterday. Half of those surveyed think the president should be impeached and removed from office with 41% opposed, according to a Fox News survey. In a separate CBS poll, 46% said Trump deserved to be impeached over his actions toward Ukraine, up from 43% in November.

- **Biden, Sanders Top Democratic Field in New Poll:** Joe Biden and Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) lead the field of Democratic presidential candidates, followed by Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), according to a NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist poll released today. The poll of Democratic and Democratic-leaning independents shows Biden with 24% support and Sanders at 22%, within the margin of error of 5.4 percentage points. Warren had 17%, and Pete Buttigieg had 13%. None of the other candidates scored above 5%.
- **Fresh Talk of Pompeo Senate Run:** Michael Pompeo on Saturday opened a personal Twitter account, spurring renewed talk that the U.S. secretary of state is preparing to run for the Senate from Kansas in 2020. The handle, @mikepompeo, issued four tweets over the weekend and had attracted more than 9,000 followers by midday yesterday. Pompeo's official account is followed by 1 million people. The State Department has requested in the past that the top U.S. diplomat be referred to as "Michael" in media reports. The arrival of the more folksy "Mike" on social media hints at Pompeo's potential move back into politics.
- **Buttigieg's Bundlers Include Blackstone Vice Chair, Tech Chiefs:** Buttigieg's campaign on Friday released the names of nearly 150 people who raised at least \$25,000 for his presidential bid, including Blackstone Group Vice Chairman Tony James and Silicon Valley entrepreneur Swati Mylavarapu. The disclosure of the names of the so-called bundlers -- supporters who collect campaign contributions from multiple donors - - comes in response to Warren, who has criticized Buttigieg for what she says is a lack of transparency.
- **Klobuchar Stakes Candidacy on Iowa:** Even though Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) is languishing in the low single digits in national polls, she insists she still has a path to winning the Democratic presidential nomination with a strong showing in the Iowa caucuses. She has endured as higher-scoring rivals have dropped out. Now she's betting that the nation's first nominating contest on Feb. 3 will give her the momentum for the primary races that follow.
- **Afghanistan Troops:** The Trump administration plans to announce the withdrawal of about 4,000 troops from Afghanistan as early as this week, NBC News reported on Saturday, citing three current and former U.S. officials. The move would leave 8,000 to 9,000 U.S. troops in the country, officials said, declining to specify when the reduction would begin and calling it a phased withdrawal over a few months.
- **U.S. Seeks Christmas Peace With North Korea:** Trump's top envoy to North Korea countered Kim Jong Un's threat of a Christmas provocation with a call for more nuclear talks to usher in a "season of peace." U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Stephen Biegun today urged Kim to return to negotiations, noting that the coming holiday was "one of the most sacred days on our calendar." Biegun made the remarks during his first visit to Seoul since North Korea threatened to give Trump a "Christmas gift" to show its frustration with the U.S.

- **Trump NSC Official Back at DOD:** Chris Miller is leaving his post as the National Security Council's senior director for counterterrorism to return to the Defense Department, according to two people familiar with the matter. Miller, a veteran of the Army's Special Forces who served in Afghanistan, had originally been assigned to the White House for a year, but that tour kept getting extended. His last day at the White House was Friday.
- **U.S. Open to Dialogue With Iran:** The U.S. is open to dialogue with Iran even as Washington enforces sanctions against the Islamic Republic, Brian Hook, the U.S. special representative for Iran, said in a Bloomberg TV interview. Iran remains a threat to international peace and security, Hook said in Doha. It's widely known that Iran was behind the attack on Saudi Arabian oil facilities in September, and the Saudi government at some point will present evidence of Iran's complicity to the United Nations Security Council, he said.
- **What's in the U.S.-China Phase One Deal:** The U.S. and China announced Friday that they reached a phase-one trade deal but provided little detail on what exactly will be part of the agreement. U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer brought a print-out of the 86-page agreement to a briefing with reporters Friday afternoon as a "show-and-tell" to prove that it's all done and written up. Lighthizer said it's an important step forward for the two countries, while acknowledging that a lot of big issues are outstanding and need to be addressed in future negotiations. Lighthizer appeared on the CBS News show "Face the Nation" yesterday to discuss the deal, calling it "totally done" but headed for a transition period to undergo "some scrubs."
- **Climate Fight Takes a Step Back:** The international effort to rein in fossil fuel pollution took a step backward this weekend after envoys at a marathon round of United Nations talks watered down language on issues they had agreed on in previous years. The delegates from almost 200 nations left Madrid after more than two weeks of discussion, agreeing only on the "urgent need" for countries to make deeper cuts to greenhouse gases. They shelved work on adding market mechanisms as a tool for countries to meet their goals and couldn't agree about finance needed to fix the problem. The result undercut principles of the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change, under which all countries agreed to deliver increasingly ambitious policies to cut pollution.
- **DOJ Pushes Corporate Mea Culpas:** The Justice Department is restructuring the way it treats voluntary self-disclosures of export control and sanctions violations in a bid to encourage more companies to step forward. An updated enforcement policy from the DOJ's National Security Division gives self-reporting and cooperative companies a clearer path to receiving non-prosecution deals in most instances. Prosecutors in the NSD's export control section must adhere to the revised guidance, issued on Friday, when deciding how much cred it to give businesses for making them aware of potential, criminal sanctions violations.

- **Tech Firms Appeal Net Neutrality Ruling:** Tech companies, public interest groups, and others that sued to block the FCC's scrapping of net neutrality rules have asked the D.C. Circuit to reconsider its decision upholding the rollback of the Obama-era requirements. The petitioners Friday asked for a rehearing by either the full U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit or a court panel. Mozilla, Vimeo, the Computer & Communications Industry Association, Public Knowledge, and the National Hispanic Media Coalition were among the petitioners.