

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Wednesday, December 16, 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

- 11:30am: President Trump holds cabinet meeting at White House
- VP Mike Pence leads coronavirus task force meeting at 4pm

CONGRESS

- Senate meets at 10am; resumes consideration of judicial nominees
- House in, votes expected around 3pm

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Politico: Hill leaders close in on Covid stimulus deal:** Congressional negotiators are on the brink of a coronavirus rescue package that would include a second round of direct payments and boost unemployment benefits, but would leave out state and local funding and a liability shield, according to lawmakers and sources briefed on the talks. The price tag of the emerging deal is roughly \$900 billion, and a deal could be finalized on Wednesday, those sources said. Senate Majority Whip John Thune (R-S.D.) said the proposal would likely include direct checks to individuals of \$600 to \$700 and a weekly unemployment boost of \$300 through March.
- **Bloomberg: Moderna's Vaccine Found Safe, Effective:** Moderna's vaccine is safe and effective in people ages 18 and older, U.S. regulators said yesterday, clearing a path for a second shot to quickly gain emergency authorization and add to the country's massive immunization campaign. The Food and Drug Administration's staff said in a report that the experimental candidate is 94.1% effective at preventing symptomatic cases of Covid-19, confirming earlier results published by the company. The report comes ahead of a meeting tomorrow of FDA advisers who will weigh whether to recommend authorization before a final FDA decision. The agency doesn't need to follow the advice of the independent vaccine experts, although it often agrees with its advisory panels. Last week, the agency authorized a similar vaccine from Pfizer and BioNTech after an advisory panel voted 17-4 to support its emergency deployment, which got underway nationwide this week.
- **Bloomberg: States Get \$227 Million for Vaccine Distribution:** The federal government will provide states and territories almost \$227 million to distribute Covid-19 vaccines and track the virus, the HHS announced yesterday. The Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention will award \$140 million to all 50 states and additional jurisdictions for vaccine preparedness and \$87 million for Covid-19 tracking and testing.

- **Bloomberg: FDA Clears First At-Home, Over-the-Counter Test:** The first test for coronavirus that can be performed entirely from home was approved by federal regulators yesterday, and can be acquired without prescriptions. Though availability initially will be limited, the new test and others being developed could make fast coronavirus screenings as accessible as over-the-counter pregnancy tests in the U.S. for the first time.
- **NPR: Biden, Pence Make Preparations to Get COVID-19 Vaccine:** High-ranking officials, including President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President Pence, are making preparations to get the COVID-19 vaccine, hoping to instill trust and confidence in the vaccine ahead of its widespread distribution as the death toll climbs to new heights. Biden, who is set to be inaugurated on Jan. 20, said Tuesday it was recommended he get the vaccine "sooner than later" by infectious disease expert Dr. Anthony Fauci, who will become the Democrat's chief medical adviser. "I want to just make sure we do it by the numbers. When I do it, you'll have notice, and we'll do it publicly," Biden said.
- **Bloomberg: Surprise Billing Deal Inches Forward:** Patients with health insurance would be protected from surprise medical bills under a discussion draft released by committee leaders Dec. 11, which would use an independent arbitration process to settle payment disputes between insurers and providers. Bipartisan, bicameral leaders of related Congressional committees said they'd work to finalize the measure based on stakeholder feedback and try to attach it to a year-end funding measure. Sens. Bill Cassidy (R-La.), Maggie Hassan (D-N.H.) and 25 other senators asked the chamber's leadership to include the four-committee agreement on surprise billing in any year-end funding bill.