

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Tuesday, December 17, 2019

(The following information comes from Bloomberg Government Website)

Schedules: White House and Congress

WHITE HOUSE

- 1:45pm: President Trump welcomes Guatemala President Jimmy Morales to White House
- 4:15pm: Trump attends Christmas reception at White House

CONGRESS

- House meets at 9am; expected to vote on spending bills that would avert a government shutdown
- Senate meets at 10am; at 11:45am, expected to vote on S. 1790, the National Defense Authorization Act
- 11am: House Rules Committee considers rule for H. Res. 755, the impeachment resolution against President Trump

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Warren Tempers Medicare for All Rhetoric:** Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Elizabeth Warren (Mass.) is starting to back away from a full-blown Medicare for All plan on the campaign trail, as she faces increased questions about whether her support for the proposal hurts her electability. After pushing the swift creation of a government-run health care system that would cover all Americans and eliminate private insurance, Warren is now emphasizing her calls for a transition period that would make it optional for most of her first term in office.
 - During a three-day bus tour through Iowa, she increasingly stressed the word “choice” in her interactions with voters, saying the three-year implementation period would let Americans keep their existing coverage or try out Medicare for All.
- **Deadline Extension for ACA Signups:** Obamacare enrollees who faced back-ups on the last day of open enrollment Sunday now have until Wednesday, 3 a.m. to sign up, according to a statement from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services yesterday. Consumers who couldn't get through to enroll in Affordable Care Act coverage using the federal HealthCare.gov exchange site could use a “waiting room” if they had logged in before the deadline, an HHS spokeswoman said on Sunday. “This additional time will give consumers the opportunity to come back and complete their enrollment” for Jan. 1 coverage, yesterday's statement said.

- **Spending Bill:** The House plans to vote today on \$1.4 trillion in government spending, less than 24 hours after releasing over 2,000 pages of legislative text detailing fiscal 2020 funds. Lawmakers face a Friday deadline to continue funding the government or risk a shutdown.
 - All 12 appropriations bills would increase spending under the bipartisan agreement between House and Senate appropriators. The set of two spending packages include unrelated measures that would repeal Obamacare taxes, raise the age for tobacco purchases to 21 and extend the Export-Import Bank for seven years.
 - Appropriators released the text of the legislation yesterday in two batches, technically avoiding the label of a 12-bill omnibus. One measure includes Commerce-Justice-Science, Defense, Financial Services and Homeland Security funding. The other includes Agriculture-FDA, Energy and Water, Interior-Environment, Labor-HHS-Education, Legislative Branch, Military Construction-VA, State and Foreign Operations, and Transportation-HUD funds.

- **What's in the Spending Bills:**
 - Boeing is poised for a big victory in the bill, which would continue funding an advanced version of its Chinook helicopters and reject the Army's proposal to stop purchasing the aircraft. The Pentagon will also be able to buy eight Boeing F-15 EX fighter aircraft and 98 Lockheed Martin F-35 Joint Strike Fighters, more than it had requested, under the \$693.3 billion compromise Defense Department measure.
 - Ride-alongs to the measure include:
 - Tax incentives for biodiesel, alcoholic beverages and short-line railroads would be retroactively extended under a compromise unveiled by congressional leaders early this morning. Those measures were included in a broader tax package the leaders are seeking to attach to the government spending bill.
 - Key provisions of an expiring satellite television law would be made permanent under the spending bill. The Satellite Television Extension and Localism Act is set to expire on Dec. 31, potentially leaving up to 870,000 Americans without access to local broadcast television stations. Provisions in the spending bill would address retransmission deals for those rural markets and allow a provider to reach 12 other unserved markets.
 - A bundle of proposed retirement tax breaks that's confounded Senate leaders for months has been added to the bill. Lawmakers added the SECURE Act, which aims to bolster retirement savings by rewarding businesses with tax credits for creating new 401(k) accounts and allowing workers to wait until age 72 before drawing down retirement funds, among other things.

- **Year-End Action on Trump Judicial Nominees:** Two district court nominees originally tapped by former President Barack Obama were among 13 judicial selections positioned for Senate votes before lawmakers adjourn for the year. Majority Leader Mitch

McConnell (R-Ky.) yesterday filed for cloture to end debate on the list of former Big Law partners, prosecutors, and state court judges tapped by Trump. Most trial court selections advanced by McConnell for votes this week would go to eight states with at least one Republican senator and five represented by Democrats.

- **Warren Hits Bloomberg Over NDAs:** Warren said yesterday that Michael Bloomberg should release women from non-disclosure agreements they signed with his company if they want to speak publicly about allegations of crude remarks and an uncomfortable work environment. Warren was asked to respond to a report by ABC News about several lawsuits that accuse Bloomberg of making crude comments to female employees in the 1990s and creating a workplace where such behavior was tolerated, claims he has denied.
- **Law Endorses Biden:** Former President Barack Obama hasn't yet made an endorsement for president, but top officials from his administration are increasingly lining up behind one of their own: former Vice President Joe Biden. Former Treasury Secretary Jack Lew joined that list yesterday, saying Obama's old running mate is best positioned to lead on the economy. Lew is the fifth Obama cabinet secretary to endorse Biden, after former Secretary of State John Kerry, former Labor Secretary Hilda Solis, former Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and former Interior Secretary Ken Salazar.
- **Trump Touts Tax Cuts, Deregulation for Market:** Trump is asserting that the current labor market revival is a direct result of his administration's economic policies, especially its deregulatory moves, even as regulatory analysts question how much rule-cutting has been done. A new report by the White House Council of Economic Advisers ahead of a meeting with Cabinet officials, governors, and local leaders on regulatory innovation credited the administration's "pro-growth policies" for spurring labor demand that has helped job openings to exceed the amount of unemployed people "for the first time on record."
- **U.S. Rejects Relief for North Korea as Trump Warns Against Tests:** The U.S. knocked back a call to ease sanctions on North Korea despite threats of further provocations, as President Donald Trump said he would "take care of" any threats the regime had in the works. The American side was responding to a UN Security Council proposal by China and Russia to lessen the economic embargo on North Korea. The countries -- Cold War allies of North Korea who have recently repaired ties with leader Kim Jong Un -- said the changes were warranted because the regime had complied with United Nations resolutions and needed "humanitarian and livelihood" relief, according to a draft provided by diplomats who asked not to be named.
 - The U.S. rejected the proposal, saying it was premature to ease sanctions while North Korea advances weapons prohibited systems and threatens escalation, according to a state department official who asked not be named. The U.S. remained committed to achieving North Korea's "complete denuclearization"

through negotiations, the official said. The Chinese-Russian resolution may prompt further Security Council discussions today.

- **Pentagon Chief Questions Turkey's NATO Commitment:** Defense Secretary Mark Esper said Turkey's threats to close two critical NATO installations raise questions about its commitment to the military alliance. A day after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned of possible retaliation if the U.S. imposes sanctions over Turkey's purchase of a Russian missile system, the Pentagon chief suggested the country may have set itself on a collision course with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. "This is something that the alliance would have to discuss, if the Turks are serious about this," Esper told reporters on his plane yesterday, according to the Defense Department's website.
- **Pakistan Court Orders Death to Ex-Military Ruler Musharraf:** A Pakistani special court sentenced former military dictator and president Pervez Musharraf to death in absentia, ending a six-year long high treason case against him and delivering a historic verdict against the country's powerful army. In a two-to-one majority, the three-member special court headed by judge Waqar Ahmad Seth announced the verdict, Musharraf's spokesman Mohammad Amjad said by phone today. Musharraf, who has been in Dubai since 2016 seeking medical treatment and never attended the legal proceedings, has the right to appeal in the Supreme Court, according to former attorney general Ashtar Ausaf.