

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Thursday, December 17, 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

- 2:15pm: President Trump, first lady Melania Trump participate in signing ceremony for H.R. 473, which authorizes a suffrage monument in D.C.
- VP Mike Pence holds rally in Columbus and Macon in Ga. for Senate Republican candidates

CONGRESS

- Congressional leaders are still haggling over the final details of nearly \$900 billion in coronavirus aid as staff members try to write the legislative language needed for House and Senate votes this week

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg: Covid-Relief Plan Talks Down to Final Details:** Congressional leaders and their staffs continued working out the details of a nearly \$900 billion coronavirus relief plan in anticipation of unveiling it as soon as today. People briefed on the negotiations say the draft of the proposal includes \$600 in payments for individuals, \$300-per-week in supplemental unemployment insurance payments and aid for small businesses as well as roughly \$17 billion for airlines. But it omits aid to state and local governments and lawsuit liability protection, the two issues that have stymied earlier attempts at an agreement.
 - Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) and House Republican Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) have been directly involved in the negotiations, raising prospect for a package that can quickly pass the House and Senate.
 - The principle negotiators on the deal for a pandemic relief bill said they continued to make progress as staff members hashed out details of legislation.
 - “We’re still close, and we’re going to get there,” McConnell said last night as he left the Capitol.
 - The House could move quickly toward a vote once the legislation is written. House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) said the goal was a vote today but that it could slip to Friday.
- **CBS News: First nursing home residents get COVID-19 vaccine as rollout expands:** The distribution of the coronavirus vaccine has expanded to nursing homes days after the first doses were given. More than a third of the 306,000 COVID-19 deaths have come from long-term care facilities and nursing home residents, according to the COVID Tracking Project. Workers in West Virginia and Florida were at the front of the line to get their first

dose of the vaccine. Members of the military are also getting immunized as the Pfizer vaccine rollout continues across the country.

- **Bloomberg: Storage Needs Push Employers' Shots Off Site:** Employers eager to see workers inoculated against the coronavirus will likely have to count on pharmacies and other vendors to administer the shots off site rather than have to tackle the litany of logistical challenges the Covid-19 vaccine presents. To vaccinate workers on site, employers would need to acquire freezers to store the vaccines from Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna at extremely cold temperatures, while also keeping track of how many doses each employee took.
- **Bloomberg: Abbott's \$25 Rapid Covid-19 Test Cleared:** Abbott Laboratories won U.S. authorization for a rapid Covid-19 test that costs \$25 and can be used at home, a new accessible option from the manufacturer after months of obstacles to screening access in the country. The authorization from the Food and Drug Administration opens a new market for Abbott's BinaxNOW, a single-use swab-collected test that produces results in 15 minutes. Until now, it had been conducted by health-care providers.
- **Bloomberg: Biden's Cabinet Picks Start to Move Through Confirmation Process:** Biden's cabinet picks are beginning to work through the confirmation process in the Republican-controlled Senate as transition officials and Democrats press to avoid delays in putting key people in place amid the pandemic. Despite the still simmering rancor of the election and President Donald Trump's refusal so far to recognize the outcome, some Senate committees are moving ahead on vetting nominees, potentially leading to some being confirmed on Inauguration Day or shortly afterward. The Senate Finance Committee sent questionnaires Tuesday to Xavier Becerra, the California attorney general tapped to run the Department of Health and Human Services, said Ashley Schapitl, a spokeswoman for Ron Wyden (Ore.), the top Democrat on the Finance Committee.
- **Stat: Tracking An FDA Advisory Panel's Review Of The Moderna Covid-19 Vaccine:** An expert panel is meeting Thursday to consider whether the Food and Drug Administration should issue a second emergency use authorization for a Covid-19 vaccine, this one made by Moderna. It is almost a foregone conclusion that it will. But the hearing still promises to tell us more about the vaccine and its use.
- **Axios: The U.S. spent \$3.8 trillion on health care last year:** The U.S. spent \$3.8 trillion on health care last year, accounting for about 18% of the entire American economy, according to new federal data. Total national health expenditures rose by 4.6% in 2019, according to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. That's a modest increase by the standards of health care spending, although it outpaced inflation. Hospitals remain the most expensive part of the system: The U.S. spent about \$1.2 trillion on hospital care last year — nearly one-third of all health spending. These figures include Medicare, Medicaid, private health insurance and out-of-pocket costs.