

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Wednesday, December 2, 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

- 12:30pm: Trump has lunch with Sec. of State Mike Pompeo
- 12:15pm: Vice President Mike Pence, second lady Karen Pence make remarks at Virtual Military Spouse Employment Business Summit
 - 2pm: Pence takes part in swearing-in of Senator-elect Mark Kelly

CONGRESS

- House returns to hold first votes of the week; meets at 2pm, first vote expected at 6:30pm, last vote at 7pm
 - Will consider four bills under suspension of the rules including bipartisan legislation, S. 945, that would impose restrictions on Chinese companies listed on U.S. exchanges
- Senate to meet at 10am
 - Will vote to advance nomination of Christopher Waller to the Federal Reserve Board
 - Majority Leader Mitch McConnell hasn't indicated he'll try to revive confirmation of Trump's other nominee Judy Shelton

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Pelosi, McConnell Fan Stimulus Hopes:** Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) each took a stab at breaking the deadlock over a new stimulus, but it wasn't clear that either side budged enough to get a deal in the short time Congress has left to act.
 - Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) -- who've previously stuck with a \$2.4 trillion coronavirus relief package -- presented a new proposal to McConnell and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, but refused to publicly release details. Schumer called it "a private proposal to help move the ball forward." McConnell, in response, began circulating his own plan to fellow Republicans, saying it had the blessing of Trump. While he labeled it a new proposal, an outline distributed to GOP senators showed it was largely a revision of an earlier \$500 billion plan that had been rejected by Democrats as inadequate.
- **Bloomberg Government: Bipartisan Group Offers \$908 Billion Stimulus Bill:** A bipartisan group of lawmakers in the House and Senate unveiled a \$908 billion stimulus proposal yesterday in an effort to break a months-long impasse. But Neither Republican nor Democratic leaders have signed on to the plan so far, leaving it facing the same long odds as the bipartisan House proposal that failed before Election Day.

- The bipartisan framework would give the government \$16 billion for vaccine distribution and coronavirus testing and contact tracing efforts. The bill would also add \$35 billion to the provider relief fund, offering the health industry another funding boost. That's lower than what Democrats have sought and is likely not sufficient to fully fund President-elect Joe Biden's proposal for a new, massive testing and tracing program.
- **Bloomberg Government: Biden Closes In on Top Health Leaders as Pandemic Ravages U.S.:** Biden's front-runner for secretary of Health and Human Services is New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, and he may announce several of his administration's health leaders as soon as next week, according to people familiar with the matter. The position of HHS secretary is down to two possibilities, the people said, between Lujan Grisham and former Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, a co-chair of the coronavirus advisory board Biden appointed shortly after he was elected.
 - Biden's health team will assume office with the U.S. still suffering from the pandemic, as virus cases and hospitalizations soared over the past month. His health secretary is expected to have input on filling other top health posts, such as FDA commissioner and the administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the people said, so those appointments may not be announced until later.
- **NPR: Health Care Workers, Nursing Home Residents To Be Prioritized For COVID-19 Vaccine:** A federal advisory committee to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention voted Tuesday to recommend who should get COVID-19 vaccines first once one is authorized for use. The 14 voting members of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, along with representatives from federal science agencies and the health care industry, voted during an emergency meeting online to recommend that the first COVID-19 vaccines should go to health care workers and residents of long-term care facilities, including nursing homes and assisted living.
- **Bloomberg Government: Medicare Hikes Payments for Some Doctors:** Primary care doctors and specialists who rely on office and outpatient visits to evaluate and manage their patients will see solid pay bumps from Medicare next year. But physicians with fewer office billings will see reimbursements in the program fall significantly, Trump's administration announced. The rate reductions in the final 2021 Medicare physician fee schedule are because of budget neutrality provisions in the Medicare Act that mandate program payment increases to be offset by reductions elsewhere.
- **Stat: Agios Drug For Rare Form Of Anemia Achieves Main Goal Of Late-Stage Trial:** Agios Pharmaceuticals said Tuesday that its experimental drug mitapivat increased hemoglobin levels in patients with a rare form of anemia — achieving the primary goal of a Phase 3 clinical trial. Mitapivat is the most important and closely followed medicine in Agios' research pipeline because of its potential to treat a range of rare blood diseases defined by the destruction or malfunction of oxygen-carrying red blood cells.
- **Modern Healthcare: ONC To Create Industry Data Standard For Patient Addresses:** HHS' Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology on Tuesday unveiled plans to develop an industrywide data standard for documenting addresses in healthcare. The project, dubbed Project US@, will launch early next year. ONC plans to issue the standard for documenting patient addresses in 2021. "This a completable project within the year," Steve Posnack, ONC's deputy national coordinator for health IT, said at a

virtual event spotlighting application programming interface projects Tuesday, where the agency announced the new project.