

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Thursday, December 5, 2019

(The following information comes from Bloomberg Government Website)

Schedules: White House and Congress

WHITE HOUSE

- President Trump returned to Washington last night from NATO meetings in London
- 1pm: Trump hosts luncheon with the Permanent Representatives of the United Nations Security Council
- 5pm: Trump delivers remarks at National Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony at The Ellipse
- 5:45pm: Trump delivers remarks at a Christmas reception at White House

CONGRESS

- Pelosi's office announced that she would speak to reporters at 9 a.m. eastern time in the Speaker's Balcony Hallway in the Capitol
- House meets at 10am; set to consider H.Res. 741, a resolution relating to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a negotiated two-state solution
 - Also to consider H.R. 2534, a measure that would ban insider trading
- 11:30am: Republican leader Kevin McCarthy holds press conference
- Senate meets at 10am; resumes consideration of judicial nominees

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Payment Rate Disclosure Rule:** The Trump administration doesn't have the authority to force hospitals to publicly disclose the privately negotiated payment rates they reach with insurance companies, a lawsuit alleges. Four of the U.S.'s leading health-care industry groups and three hospitals filed a lawsuit yesterday in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia challenging the rule that the HHS finalized Nov. 15 in an effort to make health-care costs more transparent.
- **Biden Says He Won't Appear at Impeachment:** Joe Biden said he would not appear voluntarily at impeachment proceedings, telling reporters yesterday that Republicans are trying to distract from the actions of Trump. "The president is the one who has committed impeachable crimes, and I'm not going to let him divert from that," he said after an event in Iowa Falls on his bus tour of Iowa. "I'm not going to let anyone divert from that."

- **Democrats Urge Mexico on USMCA:** House Democrats said yesterday that a deal on the stalled U.S.-Mexico-Canada free-trade agreement is within reach and urged Mexico to accept a compromise on labor-rights enforcement. “We are on the 2 1/2-yard line,” Ways and Means Chairman Richard Neal (D-Mass.) said about efforts to wrap up negotiations on the replacement for NAFTA and clear the way for approval in Congress. Mexico’s top trade negotiator, Jesus Seade, met Wednesday in Washington with his Trump administration counterpart, Robert Lighthizer, in an attempt to resolve final details.
- **China Human Rights Bill:** The Senate is rushing to approve a bill to punish China for the oppression of a Muslim ethnic group, with a bipartisan pair of senators maneuvering to get the measure to Trump as soon as possible. Sens. John Cornyn (R-Texas) and Mark Warner (D-Va.) introduced legislation yesterday that would control exports to China of surveillance and detention technologies. The legislation is aimed at stopping oppression of the Uighur population, concentrated in the Xinjiang province of northwest China, the senators said in a statement.
 - The introduction of the bill, which falls under the jurisdiction of the Senate Banking Committee, helps smooth internal Senate politics and clear the way for the chamber to pass a broader measure approved by the House on Tuesday, according to three people familiar with the effort.
- **SALT Relief Bill Vote May Happen in House This Year:** Ways and Means Democrats are aiming for a House floor vote by the end of the year on a bill to ease the SALT cap, Rep. Mike Thompson (D-Calif.) said yesterday following a group meeting. Rep. Bill Pascrell (D-N.J.) said that the release of a bill is expected next week, followed by a markup. The tax law capped state and local tax deductions at \$10,000, and addressing the limit has been a priority for Democrats in high-tax states. The panel’s Democrats are “finessing” exactly what the bill would do, House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Richard Neal (D-Mass.) said.
- **Chamber Defends Facial Recognition:** The U.S. Chamber of Commerce today released a set of policy positions cautioning regulators against passing strict rules governing facial recognition software, even as civil rights groups and some lawmakers call for the government to impose moratoriums on the technology. The chamber’s seven-point legislative blueprint calls on federal lawmakers to pass regulations for specific uses of facial recognition and “not support overly burdensome regulatory regimes, such as moratoriums or blanket prohibitions.”
- **Russian Gas Pipeline:** Trump is under pressure from two key senators to thwart completion of the Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline from Russia to Germany by sanctioning companies involved in the project. Sens. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) and Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.) are pushing to put a provision that would sanction companies involved in the construction of the pipeline in a defense spending bill that is viewed as a must-pass measure before Congress leaves Washington for the year.

- **Trump Pick Sparks Debate on Deregulation:** A Senate hearing on Trump's nominee to head the nation's top regulatory office turned into a referendum on the administration's efforts to cut rules Democrats say protect public health and the environment. Paul Ray, nominated to be Trump's second administrator of the White House Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, took flak for the administration during the hearing yesterday because he's served as acting regulatory chief for most of this year.
- **Money for New Parents:** Lawmakers from both sides of the aisle are signing on to a bipartisan bill that would provide new parents with more cash for the birth or adoption of a child. The measure, authored by Sens. Bill Cassidy (R-La.) and Kyrsten Sinema (D-Ariz.), would give a \$5,000 advance to new parents through the child tax credit. Sinema and Cassidy first released details of their proposal in July. Democrats and advocates for paid leave have said the plan doesn't guarantee leave to new parents, only providing cash for child care that then must be paid back.
- **Trump Judge Pick Changes Mind on Brown:** A Trump judicial nominee who previously wouldn't say whether the landmark Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education* that established school segregation is unconstitutional was correctly decided changed his answer at his second Senate hearing yesterday. Andrew Brasher, a Trump-appointed judge on the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Alabama who the White House tapped for an open appeals court seat, told a Senate panel the 1954 ruling was correctly decided at his confirmation hearing for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit.
- **Black Colleges Funds Draw Concerns:** A Senate deal to restore \$255 million in expired annual funding for historically black colleges and universities could face hurdles passing the House because of a provision meant to streamline applications for federal student aid. That provision has drawn concern from members of the House Ways and Means Committee because it would require the Internal Revenue Service to share taxpayer data with the Education Department.
- **2020 Schedule:** The Senate released its 2020 calendar yesterday, which leaves out January due to possible impeachment proceedings against Trump that have yet to be determined, Republican Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.) told reporters yesterday.
- **Reversing 'Mega Mergers':** Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) is writing a bill that would call on regulators to retroactively review about two decades of "mega mergers" and ban such deals going forward. Her staff recently circulated a proposal for sweeping anti-monopoly legislation, which would deliver on a presidential campaign promise to check the power of Big Tech and other industries. Although the Trump administration is currently exploring their own antitrust probes, the proposal is likely to face resistance from lawmakers.

- Also yesterday, Warren accused former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg of trying to buy the 2020 election with millions of dollars in advertising to fuel his late entry into the Democratic race. Warren delivered her message in an interview on Bloomberg Television from the company's headquarters in New York City. "I don't believe that elections ought to be for sale," Warren said.
- **Frack Ban Would Hit New Mexico Jobs Hard, Chamber Says:** The fracking ban floated by two Democratic presidential hopefuls would threaten 16% of New Mexico's workforce and badly hurt the state's economy, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce said. Some 142,000 jobs and \$86 billion of cumulative gross domestic product would be at risk through 2025 if a Democratic president managed to outlaw fracking in the southern state, the group said in a report yesterday. Warren and Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) have vowed to ban the practice, and other Democrats have pledged support for such a measure.
- **China in Close Contact with U.S. on Trade:** Chinese officials are in "close contact" with U.S. counterparts on trade negotiations, Ministry of Commerce spokesman Gao Feng said, while reiterating that tariffs should be reduced proportionately as part of a phase-one accord. Gao declined to give further details on the talks at a regular briefing in Beijing today. Stocks rose in Asia and Europe, and U.S. equity futures gained, as the world's two largest economies try to reach a truce in a 20-month-long trade war that's led to the largest volley of tariffs since the 1930s -- hitting some \$500 billion in shipments going in both directions. The U.S. has pledged to slap tariffs on more Chinese imports if a deal isn't struck by Dec. 15.
- **U.S. Jobs Report Seen Helping Trump and Fed Be a Little Patient:** The Federal Reserve and Trump may be at loggerheads over interest rates, but they have one thing in common right now: the resilient U.S. labor market is helping both be more patient. For the Fed, the November employment data due tomorrow should signal that jobs and consumers remain buoyant enough to sustain the expansion, validating Chairman Jerome Powell's view that rates can stay on hold following three cuts. For Trump, it likely reduces the urgency for a trade deal with China even with investors fretting about the possible tariff increase on Dec. 15, given that escalating levies have so far failed to significantly dent the U.S. labor market.
- **Uranium From American Miners:** A White House task force is recommending that Trump direct the federal government buy more uranium from domestic producers, according to two people familiar with the matter. The purchase of uranium by the Pentagon is among the recommendations being made by the U.S. Nuclear Fuel Working Group, comprised of cabinet level and other high-ranking officials, according to the people, who requested anonymity to discuss non-public deliberations. The task force was established to study ways to revive the U.S. uranium mining industry.

- **Amazon Faces Widening Antitrust Scrutiny:** U.S. antitrust enforcers have broadened their scrutiny of Amazon.com Inc. beyond its retail operations to include its massive cloud-computing business, according to people familiar with the matter. Investigators at the Federal Trade Commission have been asking software companies recently about practices around Amazon's cloud unit, known as Amazon Web Services, said the people, who declined to be named because they weren't authorized to speak publicly.