American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Wednesday, December 8, 2021

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:

- Biden will visit the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority in Kansas City, Mo., at 2 p.m. and deliver remarks at 2:30 p.m. Central Time on the bipartisan infrastructure law.
- The president is scheduled to return to the White House at 7:15 p.m. Eastern Time.

CONGRESS:

- The House meets at 10 a.m. with plans to vote on consider nearly 20 bills under expedited procedure.
- The Senate meets at 10 a.m. to vote on Biden’s nominees, with consideration possible of a resolution that would block the vaccine-or-testing mandate for large employers issued by the Biden administration.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- Bloomberg Government: House Sends Debt Limit, Defense Bills to Senate: The House passed legislation last night that would create a quick process to raise the U.S. debt ceiling by a simple majority vote in the Senate, approving a procedural measure on a 222 to 212 vote.
  - Under the terms of the bill, Democrats would receive one-time fast track authority to raise the U.S. debt ceiling, likely by an amount sufficient to cover borrowing through 2022.
  - The vote lessens the risk of a U.S. payment default this month. The bill would also cancel automatic cuts to Medicare, farm subsidies and other programs triggered by deficit spending earlier this year.
  - Once the bill the House just advanced is passed by the Senate, Democrats will be permitted for one time only to add a yet-to-be-determined amount to the U.S. debt ceiling without the threat of a Republican filibuster blocking the action. After Senate passage, the House would then take up the bill, Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said.

- Modern Healthcare: House Votes To Avert Looming Medicare Cuts: The bill falls short of what providers advocated but hospitals are relieved that Congress is taking steps to block tens of millions of dollars in reimbursement reductions slated to take effect next year, American Hospital Association President and CEO Rick Pollack said. "The AHA is pleased that the House has recognized that now is not the time to make cuts to hospitals and physicians under the Medicare program," Pollack said in a news release. "Providers on the front lines of the
fight against COVID-19 will not face additional imminent financial jeopardy as they continue to care for patients and communities.”

- **Bloomberg Government: The House last night also passed a compromise defense policy bill** that would authorize a $25 billion budget boost for the Pentagon, rejecting Biden’s request for $715 billion amid concerns about countering an emerging China. The bill, passed by a vote on 363-70, would authorize $768.2 billion for U.S. national security in fiscal 2022. It would authorize funding for three DDG-51 Arleigh Burke destroyers, two more than the Navy requested, and would allow funding for 85 Lockheed Martin F-35 Joint Strike Fighters, the same as the Pentagon’s request.
  - The bill, which is typically considered must-pass because it authorizes pay for troops in harm’s way, backs a pay raise of 2.7% and also spells out policies on counter-terrorism and deterring strategic competitors such as China and Russia. The Senate could consider the measure this week or next.

- **Bloomberg Government: Senior Care Provisions Drive Support for Biden Spending Plan:** A host of aging services providers on Monday called on the U.S. Senate to quickly pass — without major changes — the Build Back Better legislation already passed by the House. The social spending legislation (H.R. 5376) includes numerous provisions designed to improve the quality of life for seniors, including expansion of Medicaid’s home and community-based care (HCBS) program by roughly $150 billion over 10 years.

- **Bloomberg Government: Senate Panel Sets Califf Hearing:** The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee announced a Dec. 14 hearing to consider the nomination of Robert Califf to serve as commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, according to a press release.