

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Tuesday, February 11, 2020

(The following information comes from Bloomberg Government Website)

Schedules: White House and Congress

WHITE HOUSE

- President Trump has intelligence briefing at 1:45pm; participates in signing ceremony for S. 153, a Veterans career bill at 3:45pm

CONGRESS

- House meets at 10am, first votes predicted 1:30pm-2pm

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Trump Projects Medicare, Medicaid Savings:** Trump's proposed budget projects that taxpayers would save \$920 billion for Medicaid and \$756 billion for Medicare over 10 years. But there's a catch: All the policies it proposes need to be implemented to achieve those savings. Many of those policies, however, are either tied up in court or facing other opposition.
 - For Medicaid, the Health and Human Services Department's annual budget proposal presumes that expanded work requirements, tighter beneficiary eligibility screening, and capped or "block grant" state funding will all go into effect. Similarly, the HHS budget says taxpayers could save \$756 billion in Medicare through 2030 by reducing fraud and waste and relying on lower payments to hospitals through "site-neutral" payment policies.
- **Drug Pricing Executive Order:** Trump is considering taking executive action to lower drug prices ahead of the 2020 election, officials familiar with the matter say, as he enters his re-election seeking to rebut Democratic criticisms that his policies have hurt U.S. health care. If he proceeds, he would force drugmakers to take lower payments from Medicare for treatments administered in doctors' offices, such as Bristol-Myers Squibb's immune-boosting Opdivo for cancer and Regeneron's Eylea for eye conditions. The order would apply to certain drugs bought by Medicare Part B, the program for the elderly and disabled.
- **Trump Says Senate Gave Him 'Full, Complete' Acquittal:** Trump bragged about his "full, complete" acquittal in his first rally since the Republican-led Senate cleared him in his impeachment trial, while assailing Democrats and undocumented immigrants and repeating a false claim about his 2016 election. Trump addressed thousands of supporters in Manchester, N.H. the day before the Democratic primary. The president's rally was his latest effort to steal the spotlight from his rivals; he held a similar rally in Des Moines, Iowa, before the error-plagued Democratic caucus there last week.
 - Senate Republicans "voted to reject the outrageous, partisan impeachment hoax, and to issue a full, complete and absolute, total acquittal. And it wasn't even close,"

Trump said. "In the House, we won 196 to 0, and then we got three Democrats. And in the Senate, other than Romney, we got 52 to nothing," he said, referring to Sen. Mitt Romney (R-Utah), who became the first senator in U.S. history to vote to remove a president of his own party from office.

- **Pay May Drop Under 2020 Democrats' Safety Net Plans:** Proposals by several Democratic presidential candidates to shore up Social Security by raising payroll taxes could have a downside: lower economic growth and reduced wages, according to a study by the right-leaning Tax Foundation. Democratic contenders including Biden and Sanders are proposing higher payroll taxes as some voters grow concerned that the Social Security trust fund they're paying into won't be there when it's time for them to retire.
 - "An increase in the payroll tax rate or the payroll tax base results in lower wages for workers, as payroll taxes are fully borne by labor," according to the Tax Foundation study released today. "This results in lower economic growth and lower after-tax incomes, ranging from a drop in economic output from -0.28% for Biden's proposal to -1.17% for Sanders'."
- **Bloomberg Unveils Immigration Plan:** Former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg proposed an immigration plan similar to proposals from moderate Democratic presidential rivals that includes reversing Trump's policies, creating a path to citizenship for undocumented residents, and allowing "place-based" visas. Similarities with Biden and Buttigieg's plans include rescinding Trump's travel ban, ending family separation policies at the border, protecting Dreamers, increasing the cap on resettling refugees and updating the asylum process.
- **Security Chief Warns of Vote Meddling:** The head of U.S. counterintelligence operations said he's worried foreign adversaries might seize on the confusion that erupted over voting in the Iowa Democratic caucuses last week to advance disinformation and influence campaigns. "How could our adversaries take what happened in Iowa and pour gasoline on that?" William Evanina, director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center, said yesterday. Evanina didn't say he was aware of any foreign influence or disinformation affecting the Iowa caucus process or vote.
- **House GOP Moves Two Trump Defenders to Key Spots:** House Republicans are putting two of Trump's most outspoken defenders into position to take leading roles in challenging any investigations of the president launched by Democrats between now and Election Day. Reps. Jim Jordan (R-Ohio) and Mark Meadows (R-N.C.) are set to be elevated as the ranking Republicans on the Judiciary and Oversight committees respectively when House GOP members meet today. The two committees will be main venues for Democratic post-impeachment probes of the president.
 - Jordan and Meadows were ubiquitous during the House impeachment hearings on cable news programs and Twitter. Jordan was temporarily placed on the Intelligence Committee during public hearings by GOP leaders to cross-examine witnesses and

challenge evidence. During the Senate trial, both were designated by Trump to serve as defense advisers and public surrogates.

- **Senate to Vote This Week on Limiting Trump's Iran Options:** The Senate will take up a resolution this week intended to rein in Trump's ability to attack Iran without congressional authorization, as Democrats and a small group of Republican senators push back following the killing in January of Iranian General Qassem Soleimani. "This is not about bucking the president," Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah) said yesterday. "This about making sure the process works as the Constitution requires."
 - Lee is one of four Republican senators co-sponsoring the measure with Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.) that would order the president to cease any hostilities against Iran, its government or its military without express authorization from Congress.
 - The GOP support will provide the 51 votes needed for the Senate to pass the resolution. The House passed a similar measure in January but would need to pass Kaine's resolution for the legislation to go to Trump's desk. The president is likely to veto it, and the Senate lacks the votes for an override. "We're likely to start the debate on Wednesday afternoon," Kaine said. "We'll probably have it done by Thursday."
- **Appeals Pick Clears Test Vote:** A Trump appeals court nominee opposed by civil rights groups moved closer to likely confirmation yesterday. The Senate voted along party lines 46 to 41 to invoke cloture, or limit debate, on the nomination of Andrew Brasher to the Atlanta-based U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit. Brasher sits on the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Alabama, a position he has held for under a year. He's opposed by Democrats, the NAACP and other civil rights groups, who point to his work on cases involving voting and LGBT rights in his role as Alabama's solicitor general as evidence of bias.
- **Blue States a Hurdle for Trump's Judicial Appointments:** Trump's push to reshape the federal judiciary with conservatives is likely to slow in 2020 as most of the remaining vacancies are in California and other blue states. Almost 84% of the nearly 80 current and expected district court vacancies are in states with at least one Democratic senator and fully 53 are in blue states, or states with two Democratic senators.
 - That means this year – an election year when there's already much less time to get things done in the bitterly divided chamber with a third of seats up for election in November – the White House will have to work with Democratic senators to get judges confirmed that they can agree on, or possibly accept a lower yield on one of Trump's most successful priorities.
- **Shelby to Meet With Fed Picks:** Sen. Richard Shelby (R-Ala.), a senior member of the Senate Banking Committee, said he'll meet with Federal Reserve nominees Judy Shelton and Christopher Waller today to "talk with them about their views on the economy and whether they're traditional views," Shelby told reporters. He says Shelton's past support for reviving

a gold standard for the U.S. currency is “outside the mainstream,” adding: “We might as well go back to the barter system.”

- **Restrictions on Puerto Rico Aid:** Senate Democrats, in a letter to Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson, expressed “serious concerns with the unprecedented restrictions and delays” imposed on \$16.5 billion in Puerto Rico relief and demanded HUD remove the restrictions in a letter. The withheld money is in Community Development Block Grant funds for disaster mitigation and recovery, the letter said. Trump designated Puerto Rico a major disaster area last month after earthquakes shocked the bankrupt island.
- **African Swine Fever Threat:** African swine fever has the capacity to decimate the U.S. hog population – and lawmakers just took a step toward preventing it. The House by voice vote yesterday cleared a measure for the president’s signature, adding 240 agricultural specialists annually to the ranks of Customs and Border Protection over five years. Lawmakers reason the increase in staff will lead to better detection of African swine fever at the border.
- **Trump Cites Past ‘Abuses’ for Budget Cuts:** Trump said his administration is overhauling federal regulations and enforcement because the government has used arbitrary and abusive tactics to “go after” businesses. “Our commitment to regulatory reform stems from the simple truth that the vast majority of business owners want to do the right thing, comply with the law, and treat their workers fairly,” Trump said in his budget message to Congress yesterday. “The Federal Government ignored this reality for far too long and abused its authority to go after businesses, especially small businesses and entrepreneurs, in ways that can only be described as arbitrary and abusive,” the president said.
 - Trump’s letter was sent shortly after the White House released its fiscal 2021 spending request.
- **Federal Pay Raises Limited to 1%:** Trump notified Congress of a plan to limit pay increases for civilian federal employees covered by the General Schedule from January 2021. “I have determined that for 2021 the across-the-board base pay increase will be limited to 1% and locality pay percentages will remain at their 2020 levels,” Trump said. He made the changes citing Title 5 of the U.S. code, which allows him to authorize alternative plans for pay adjustments “if, because of ‘national emergency or serious economic conditions affecting the general welfare,’ I view the increases that would otherwise take effect as inappropriate,” Trump said.
- **Trump Wins Meeting Records Suit:** Trump won dismissal of a lawsuit filed by a watchdog group that accused him and his staff of violating federal law by failing to keep proper records of his interactions with foreign leaders including Russian President Vladimir Putin. U.S. District Judge Amy Berman Jackson in Washington dismissed the suit yesterday, saying she doesn’t have the authority “to oversee the President’s day-to-day compliance with the statutory provisions in this case.” The suit, filed in 2019 by the Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington and the National Security Archive, accused Trump of violating the Presidential Records Act.

- U.S. Says Stone Should Serve 9 Years:** Longtime Republican operative Roger Stone deserves to spend as long as nine years in prison for lying to Congress to protect Trump and other crimes, U.S. prosecutors told a judge. Stone, who was convicted in November, is due to be sentenced on Feb. 20 by U.S. District Judge Amy Berman Jackson. If accepted by the judge, Stone's sentence would be the longest of those sent to prison as a result of Special Counsel Robert Mueller's probe of Russian meddling. Trump weighed in with a tweet this morning, saying that Stone was facing a "horrible and very unfair situation."
- Trump Adviser 'Reforming' Staff After Vindman Ouster:** Trump's National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien said his staff was "bloated" when he took over last year and that he plans to reduce it to about 100 people, after an aide who testified in the House impeachment inquiry was dismissed on Friday. "We think a more efficient NSC and leaner NSC is a more effective NSC," O'Brien told reporters traveling with Trump to the rally in New Hampshire yesterday, using the abbreviation for the National Security Council. "This is something that people in both parties have been concerned about in the past, the size of the NSC," O'Brien added. "So I think we've streamlined it. We're reforming it."
- Deaths Top 1,000: U.S. Confirms 13th Infection:** The death toll from the coronavirus climbed above 1,000, as the Chinese province at the epicenter of the outbreak reported its highest number of fatalities. China's Hubei province, which added 103 more deaths, has removed two health officials from their posts, according to state television, as criticism has mounted over China's transparency and speed in handling the epidemic. Trump said he believes warm weather will curb the spread of the disease, as the U.S. reported a 13th infection.
- Injury Count From Iran Strike Rises:** At least 109 U.S. service members in Iraq suffered mild traumatic brain injury in the missile attack launched in retaliation after Trump ordered the assassination of a top Iranian general, the Department of Defense said in a statement. That's an increase of 45 since the Pentagon's last report following the missile attack in January. "Numbers can change," DOD said in the statement.

 - o Trump last night downplayed the severity of head injuries. "They landed in a way that didn't hit anybody," Trump said of Iran's missile strike in a Fox Business interview. "And so when they came in and told me that nobody was killed, I was impressed by that and, you know, I stopped something that would have been very devastating for them." He didn't specify what he stopped. He said he later found out that there were "head trauma" injuries.
 - o Trump last month described the injuries as "headaches" and said he didn't consider them similar to other injuries, such as losing a limb. He echoed that sentiment yesterday. "Head trauma -- that exists, but it's, you know, I viewed it a little bit differently than most and I won't be changing my mind on that," Trump said yesterday.

- **Casualties Linked to U.S.-Afghan Reconstruction:** U.S.-led reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan since 2002 are linked to the deaths or injuries of more than 5,100 people in addition to more than \$130 billion in financial costs, according to a new report on America's longest war. Some 2,214 people were killed and another 2,921 wounded while taking part in reconstruction and stabilization missions across the war-ravaged nation from 2002-2018, according to a report published late yesterday by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, or SIGAR, a Pentagon watchdog.