

# American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Wednesday, February 17, 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

- Morning: Vice President Kamala Harris appears on NBC's "Today" show
- 11am: White House Covid-19 Response Team briefing
- 11:30pm: Biden, Harris receive daily brief
- 12:30pm: Biden, Harris have lunch
- 12:30pm: White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki, Deputy National Security Advisor for Cyber and Emerging Technology Anne Neuberger give press briefing
- 1pm: Jill Biden hosts virtual roundtable on military child education
- 3:30pm: Biden, Harris meet labor leaders at the White House to discuss stimulus, infrastructure

### CONGRESS

- House, Senate on recess

## Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Democrats Plan Vote on Biden Aid on Feb. 26:** The House is aiming to vote Feb. 26 on its \$1.9 trillion stimulus plan. House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) laid out the schedule in a letter to fellow Democrats yesterday. It's possible House members will have to take the measure up again the week of March 1, in case senators send back an amended version, Hoyer's letter said. Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) has said she'll send the bill to the Senate as soon as it passes the House.
  - Also in the stimulus plan is a temporary expansion of the Affordable Care Act's premium tax credits and increased funding for states that provide Medicaid to more lower-income adults. Democrats are also preparing a more permanent expansion of Obamacare after years of erosion amid GOP-led efforts.
- **Stat: Novartis, Gates Foundation Pursue A Simpler Gene Therapy For Sickle Cell:** Novartis and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation are joining forces to discover and develop a gene therapy to cure sickle cell disease with a one-step, one-time treatment that is affordable and simple enough to treat patients anywhere in the world, especially in sub-Saharan Africa where resources may be scarce but disease prevalence is high. The three-year collaboration, announced Wednesday, has initial funding of \$7.28 million.
- **Bloomberg Government: Haaland's Interior Hearing Set:** The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee will hold a confirmation hearing Feb. 23 for Interior secretary nominee Rep. Deb Haaland (D-N.M.), according to a spokeswoman for Chairman Joe

Manchin (D-W.Va.). Haaland will face tough questions from Republican senators over the Biden administration's moratorium on new oil and gas drilling on public lands, as well as her own opposition to fossil fuel energy production. An enrolled member of the Pueblo of Laguna, Haaland would be the first Native American to serve as Interior secretary if confirmed.

- **Bloomberg Government: SCOTUS Review of Medicaid Work Rules Hinges on Letter:** The Trump administration's eleventh-hour attempt to preserve Medicaid work requirements and circumvent Biden's plan to rescind them hinges on the question of whether the effort amounted to guidance or binding contracts, legal analysts say.
  - At issue are letters former Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Administrator Seema Verma sent to states in January to keep Medicaid waivers in effect for nine months after any government movement to rescind them. Verma's move is seen as an attempt to keep the work requirements alive until the Supreme Court can rule on their validity in a case it will hear in March. The Biden Administration on Friday notified those states that the Verma letters are rescinded.
- **Bloomberg Government: Biden's First Address to Congress Not Likely Till March:** Biden's first address to Congress is all but certain to slip into March, making it the latest debut presidential speech to lawmakers in decades. The Senate's impeachment trial of Trump slowed work on a coronavirus relief bill, delaying the originally expected timeline. Two White House officials said yesterday they didn't expect Biden to lay out his longer-term economic recovery plan – set to feature in the address to the joint session – until after the aid bill passes.
- **Bloomberg Government: Biden Says He Invoked Production Law for Vaccines:** Biden said that Moderna and Pfizer agreed to sell more doses of their coronavirus vaccine to the U.S. faster than planned after he invoked federal law that could force their production. The government announced last week that the two companies would deliver 300 million doses of each of their vaccines to the U.S. by the end of July, enough to inoculate all American adults. "We got them to move up time because we used the National Defense Act to be able to help the manufacturing piece of it, to get more equipment," Biden said at last night's town hall event.
- **Bloomberg Government: HHS Beats Obamacare Provider Fee Appeal by Texas:** A Texas-led state group again failed to recoup Obamacare provider fees they paid to the IRS on behalf of Medicaid Managed Care Organizations as a federal appeals court reaffirmed that fee was a valid federal tax. The Fifth Circuit withdrew a July opinion rejecting the states' attempt to get back roughly \$480 million they gave to the U.S. under the Affordable Care Act.