

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Weekly Capitol Hill Update - Tuesday, February 20, 2018

Congressional Schedule

Congress

- Congress on recess until Feb. 26

Legislative Update

- **Week in Review**
 - *GOP negotiators meet on ObamaCare market fix.* “GOP Sens. Lamar Alexander (Tenn.) and Susan Collins (Maine) met with House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Greg Walden (R-Ore.) to discuss an effort to get ObamaCare stability measures included in a coming long-term government funding bill due in March, known as an omnibus.”
 - To read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/374147-gop-negotiators-meet-on-obamacare-market-fix>
 - *House votes to add requirements for Americans with Disabilities Act lawsuits.* “The legislation, which passed 225-192 largely along party lines, would prevent people from filing lawsuits alleging violations of the ADA unless business owners are given written notice and fail to offer a written response describing improvements or to make substantial progress in removing the barrier by the end of a six-month period. The measure would also require the Justice Department to establish a program for educating governments and property owners on how to enhance accommodations for people with disabilities.”
 - To read more: <http://thehill.com/blogs/floor-action/house/374034-house-votes-to-add-requirements-for-americans-with-disabilities-act>
 - *House GOP discussing repeal of ObamaCare employer mandate.* “House Republicans are in discussions about repealing or delaying ObamaCare’s employer mandate to offer health insurance, House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Kevin Brady (R-Texas) said Tuesday. Brady told

reporters that he has discussed the idea with Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar, as well as other members of the Ways and Means Committee.

- To read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/373691-house-gop-discussing-repeal-of-obamacare-employer-mandate>

- *Trump fires first salvo on drug prices.* "President Trump is beginning to move on high drug prices, unveiling a series of modest proposals in his budget request released Monday. It's the first time Trump has issued major proposals to lower drug prices since coming to the White House, despite criticizing pharmaceutical companies last year and accusing them of "getting away with murder."

- To read more: <http://thehill.com/regulation/healthcare/373530-trump-fires-first-salvo-on-drug-prices>

- *Trump budget seeks savings through ObamaCare repeal.* "The White House budget for fiscal 2019 seeks major savings by repealing ObamaCare and endorsed a Senate GOP bill as the best way to do so. "The Budget supports a two-part approach to repealing and replacing Obamacare, starting with enactment of legislation modeled closely after the Graham-Cassidy-Heller-Johnson (GCHJ) bill as soon as possible," the White House said in its budget request."

- To read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/373435-trump-budget-seeks-savings-through-obamacare-repeal>

- **Week Ahead**

- *Trump officials move to expand non-ObamaCare insurance plans.* "The Trump administration on Tuesday made a controversial move to expand access to health insurance that does not meet ObamaCare requirements. The proposed rules would expand access to short-term health insurance to a duration of up to 12 months, lifting the Obama administration's restrictions that limited the plans to a maximum of three months."

- To read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/374599-trump-officials-move-to-expand-non-obamacare-insurance-plans>

- *Ryan calls for 'incremental' health reforms after failure of ObamaCare repeal.* "Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) is calling for "incremental" health-care reform after the Senate failed to pass an ObamaCare replacement bill last year. Asked on Fox Business on Tuesday if lawmakers will try again to pass an ObamaCare repeal legislation this year, Ryan pointed to incremental changes."

- To read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/373612-ryan-calls-for-incremental-health-reforms-after-failure-of-obamacare-repeal>

- ***Drug industry scrambles after rare loss in budget deal.*** “A provision included in the budget deal approved last week raised the share of costs that drug companies have to pick up as part of closing the “donut hole,” a gap in drug coverage for Medicare Part D beneficiaries. Drug companies are quickly mobilizing to try and undo the change, or at least roll it back in some fashion. The most likely avenue is the long-term government funding bill that Congress is expected to pass in March, the lobbyists said.”
 - To read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/373849-drug-industry-scrambles-after-rare-loss-in-budget-deal>

- ***Congress punts fight over Dreamers to March.*** “Congress is poised to kick a heated immigration fight into overtime, with no clear path forward. With the Senate rejecting four proposals – including President Trump's preferred plan and a key bipartisan deal – and no viable backup plan in sight, lawmakers are poised to hit pause on the issue until at least next month as they go back to the drawing board.”
 - To read more: <http://thehill.com/homenews/senate/374326-congress-punts-fight-over-dreamers-to-march>

- ***Top Oversight Dem pushes for White House opioid briefing.*** “The top Democrat on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee is calling for the White House to brief the panel on its efforts to implement recommendations from the president's opioid commission. Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-Md.) wrote a letter to Oversight Chairman Trey Gowdy (R-S.C.) on Friday urging him to request the briefing from presidential counselor Kellyanne Conway, who has helmed the White House's efforts to combat the opioid epidemic.”
 - To read more: <http://thehill.com/homenews/house/374297-top-oversight-dem-pushes-for-white-house-opioid-briefing>

Regulatory and Administration Update

- ***CMS Quality Conference 2018.*** “Join nearly 2500 thought leaders in American health care quality improvement at this premier learning and action event, brought to you by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Welcoming attendees from across the health care spectrum, the conference will explore how patients, advocates, providers, researchers, and the many leaders in health care quality improvement can develop and spread solutions to some of America’s most pervasive health system challenges.”
 - For more information: <https://cmsqualityconference.com/>

- ***Verma Renews Commitment to Value-Based Models.*** “Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Administrator Seema Verma renewed her commitment Monday to reshaping the U.S. healthcare delivery system into one that values quality over quantity. Delivering prepared remarks at the CMS Quality Conference in Baltimore, Verma cited the progress CMS has made in her less-than-one-year on the job and outlined the agency’s path forward under direction from the Trump administration and Alex Azar, the new Health and Human Services secretary.”
 - To read more: <http://www.healthleadersmedia.com/quality/verma-renews-commitment-value-based-models>
- ***Azar defends Trump drug pricing proposals, pushing back against criticism.*** “Alex Azar defended the drug pricing proposals in the Trump administration’s latest budget request Thursday, pushing back on criticism that none of the ideas would lower the list prices for prescription drugs.”
 - To read more: <https://www.statnews.com/2018/02/15/azar-budget-hearings/>
- ***U.S. healthcare spending to climb 5.3 percent in 2018: agency.*** “United States health spending is projected to rise 5.3 percent in 2018, reflecting rising prices of medical goods and services and higher Medicaid costs, a U.S. government health agency said on Wednesday, an upward trend it forecasts for the next decade. The increase represents a sharp uptick from 2017 spending, which the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) now estimates to have been a 4.6 percent climb to nearly \$3.5 trillion. It had previously forecast a 2017 rise of 5.4 percent.”
 - To read more: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-healthcare-spending/u-s-healthcare-spending-to-climb-5-3-percent-in-2018-agency-idUSKCN1FY2ZD>
- ***HHS chief: No decision yet on lifetime limits for Medicaid.*** “Under fire from Democrats, Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar on Thursday said the department has not yet taken a position on whether it will allow states to put lifetime caps on how long people can be enrolled Medicaid.”
 - To read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/374113-hhs-chief-no-decision-yet-on-lifetime-limits-for-medicaid>
- ***HHS head says he will uphold ObamaCare as law.*** “In response to a question about a controversial plan in Idaho to allow insurers to sell plans that don’t meet ObamaCare requirements, Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar told a congressional panel that he has a responsibility to enforce the law.”
 - To read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/health-reform-implementation/373799-hhs-head-says-he-will-uphold-obamacare-as-law>
- ***FDA Head Vows To Tackle High Drug Prices And Drugmakers ‘Gaming The System’*** “Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Scott Gottlieb said he will do

everything “within my lane” to combat high drug prices and that he sees drug companies “gaming the system to try to block competition” in a multitude of ways in the marketplace. In a wide-ranging interview with Kaiser Health News on Thursday, Gottlieb also said that he wants to speed up the U.S. approval process for generic and “biosimilar” versions of biologic drugs, which are drugs comprised of living organisms, such as plant or animal cells.”

- To read more: <https://khn.org/news/fda-head-vows-to-tackle-high-drug-prices-and-drugmakers-gaming-the-system/>

Articles of Interest

- ***Warning signs of a crisis in kidney research.*** “Early last month, de Boer published an article addressing the issue of burnout in kidney research. He and his colleagues noticed an alarming trend in worker satisfaction in nephrology, the scientific name for kidney research. According to “Burnout in Nephrology,” one of the three main articles de Boer and his colleagues wrote, “44 percent of United States adult nephrology fellows were ‘somewhat, slightly, or not at all satisfied’ with their career choice.” Much of this dissatisfaction stemmed from a lack of job opportunities, difficult hours, and poor teaching or mentoring. According to the accompanying “Transforming Nephrology,” one study that examined four medical specialties (but did not include nephrology) found that “clinicians spend only 27 percent of their total time on direct clinical care and 49.2 percent of their time on [electronic medical record-keeping] and clerical work, with much of this time occurring after hours during personal time.”
 - To read more: http://www.dailyuw.com/science/article_71883ecc-1209-11e8-8d4a-bba986f765c1.html
- ***American Kidney Fund Announces Significant Enhancements to Charitable Premium Assistance Program.*** “The American Kidney Fund (AKF) – the nation’s leading nonprofit working on behalf of Americans with kidney disease – today announced that it will enhance its Health Insurance Premium Program (HIPP) to provide post-transplant charitable premium assistance to patients for a full plan year. The transplant modification is one of several significant HIPP enhancements that go into effect April 1.”
 - To read the full press release: <http://www.kidneyfund.org/news/news-releases/akf-announces-significant-enhancements-to-charitable-premium-assistance-program.html>
- ***Flu shot only 36 percent effective, making bad year worse.*** “The flu vaccine is doing a poor job protecting older Americans and others against the bug that’s causing most illnesses. Preliminary figures released Thursday suggest the vaccine is 36 percent effective overall in preventing flu illness severe enough to send a patient to the doctor’s office.”

- To read more: <https://apnews.com/84f1b7bf62ae47c28a8c82f0cb53bcdd/Flu-shot-only-36-percent-effective,-making-bad-year-worse>
- ***Medical Records May Finally Be Coming To Your Apple Smartphone.*** “In the upcoming release of Apple's iOS operating system for iPhones this spring, the Health app will include health records, so patients can take information about their immunizations, medications, lab results and more with them. The feature will first be available to patients of medical providers who partnered with Apple, including Johns Hopkins Medicine; OhioHealth; Ochsner Health System in Jefferson Parish, La.; and Cedars-Sinai in Los Angeles. It won't cost those patients anything to use this feature, assuming they're already iPhone users.”
 - To read more: <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2018/02/14/585715952/medical-records-may-finally-be-coming-to-your-apple-smartphone>
- ***Amazon eyes another healthcare shake-up: Getting into supply chain.*** “Amazon officials have been meeting with hospital executives, many from prominent systems like New York's Northwell Health, to brainstorm ideas and flush out potential issues for growing its business to business marketplace such that it could supply hospitals with anything from gauze to joint replacement devices, according to a report by the Wall Street Journal.”
 - To read more: <http://www.healthcarefinancenews.com/news/amazon-eyes-another-healthcare-shake-getting-supply-chain>