

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Monday, February 24, 2020

(The following information comes from Bloomberg Government Website)

Schedules: White House and Congress

WHITE HOUSE

- President Trump in India for trade talks over next two days with Prime Minister Narendra Modi

CONGRESS

- House not in session; no votes expected
- Senate meets at 3pm; will resume consideration of judicial nominees

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **HHS Budget:** HHS Secretary Alex Azar will testify at a Senate Appropriations Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee hearing on his department's fiscal 2021 budget tomorrow. In addition, Azar will attend a pair of House panels – the Appropriations Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee on Wednesday and the Ways and Means Committee on Thursday – where he's poised to face tougher receptions than he got at the Senate Finance Committee earlier this month.
 - House Democrats have been fiercely critical of the White House's health agenda, lately focusing on the Health Adult Opportunity proposal that would allow states to "block grant" their Medicaid programs, as well as the ongoing legal fight over Obamacare. Some members will likely try to get Azar to talk about drug pricing and highlight the House-passed Medicare negotiation bill.
 - "Medicaid and Medicaid expansion has meant so much to people in this country," Brad Woodhouse, president of Protect Our Care, an advocacy group aligned closely with Democrats, told reporters last week. He pointed out that the White House's fiscal 2021 budget proposal included nearly \$1 trillion in cuts to Medicaid spending over the next 10 years.
- **Trump to Request Coronavirus Funds:** Trump will soon ask Congress for emergency funds to fight the coronavirus outbreak, Politico reported, citing four people with knowledge of matter who weren't identified. The funding may be as little as \$1 billion, significantly lower than some health officials say is sufficient, two of the people told Politico. The money could be spent quickly on developing potential vaccines and lab tests, they said.
 - The request is preliminary and the amount could change, a White House official told Politico. Lawmakers have been told to expect the request in days, the report cited a congressional aide as saying.
 - The World Health Organization cautioned years ago that a mysterious "disease X" could spark an international contagion. The new coronavirus illness, Covid-19, with its ability to quickly morph from mild to deadly, is emerging as a contender.

- The outbreak presents another reason for nations with fiscal surpluses to boost their spending and support the global economy, the head of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development said. "It's a call to arms," Angel Gurría, secretary general of the OECD, said in an interview with Bloomberg TV in Saudi Arabia on Saturday. "Look at what's going on. Already we were in a slowdown, we had trade tensions, investment was suffering. And now we have the coronavirus."
- **Defense Deals:** The U.S. will sign military deals worth more than \$3 billion with India tomorrow, Trump said at the start of his visit.
 - "We make the greatest weapons ever made. Airplanes. Missiles. Rockets. Ships. We make the best and we're dealing now with India. But this includes advanced air-defense systems and armed and unarmed aerial vehicles," Trump told a cheering crowd. Last week, India's cabinet cleared a \$2.6 billion purchase from Lockheed Martin of 24 multi-role MH-60R Seahawk maritime helicopters to the Indian navy.
 - Trump also reiterated his pledge that the U.S. would make a significant trade deal with India. "We are in the early stages of discussion for an incredible trade agreement to reduce barriers of investment between the United States and India," he said. "And I am optimistic that, working together, the prime minister and I can reach a fantastic deal that's good and even great for both of our countries." He gave no time line for a deal.
- **Nevada Coalition Gives Sanders Clearest Path to Nomination:** Sen. Bernie Sanders' (I-Vt.) commanding win in Nevada dismantled the conventional wisdom about his level of appeal. It broadened his coalition to look more like the Democratic Party as a whole and will make it harder for fearful moderates to impede his path to the nomination.
 - The knock on Sanders always has been that his energetic but narrow base -- young, mostly white, heavily male and largely disaffected -- would make it easy for Trump to roll over him come November. Nevada suggested otherwise, as Sanders won support from Latinos, African-Americans, union workers, people without college educations and voters up to age 45. In Sanders' view, that populist coalition is a mirror-image of Trump's own but just as potent.
 - His double-digit win there also shows he can take pieces from the support of Joe Biden, Pete Buttigieg, Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) and Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), leaving them to split the anti-Sanders vote four ways -- or five, including Michael Bloomberg, who joins the balloting on Super Tuesday, March 3. Sanders already is eyeing a win Saturday in South Carolina, long thought to be Biden's last redoubt.
- **Sanders Brushes Off Questions on Costs, Age:** Sanders struggled to provide details on exactly how he would pay for his sweeping proposals to expand health care, child care and more, and also brushed off questions about his age in an interview broadcast by CBS' "60 Minutes" yesterday. He said the Democratic Party has moved toward him over the past four years -- since he waged a lengthy primary fight against Hillary Clinton -- and "that the ideas that seemed radical four years ago are now kind of mainstream."
 - But while he's proposed options such as higher taxes on the wealthy to pay for the roughly \$30 trillion price tag for his centerpiece Medicare for All health care plan --

as well as a Green New Deal, universal child care and canceling student loan debt -- Sanders was reticent about specifics. "I can't rattle off to you every nickel and every dime," Sanders said when asked repeatedly by correspondent Anderson Cooper how much his plans would cost. "But we have accounted for -- you -- you talked about Medicare for All. We have options out there that will pay for it."

- **Buttigieg Claims 'Errors' in Nevada:** Buttigieg's campaign says the Nevada caucus results showed "errors and inconsistencies" and called for more transparency as the state party continues to report data. In a letter sent to the Nevada State Democratic Party on Saturday, the Buttigieg campaign said it had received more than 200 incident reports during the caucus and wants the party to investigate them.
- **Clyburn Warns Sanders Victory May Endanger House:** The highest-ranking African-American in Congress warned that if Sanders is the 2020 Democratic nominee the party could lose many of the moderate seats they won to retake the House in 2018. "It's going to be tough to hold on to these jobs if you have to make the case for a self-proclaimed democratic socialist," House Majority Whip James Clyburn (D-S.C.) said on ABC's "This Week." Many voters are "leery" of the socialist label, he added.
 - Clyburn said he will endorse a candidate following the Tuesday night Democratic debate in South Carolina. He plans to endorse Biden on Wednesday, Politico reported, citing multiple sources with knowledge of the plans.
- **Bloomberg Tries to Get Past Stumbles:** Michael Bloomberg's offer to lift three non-disclosure agreements and other steps taken in recent days are meant to move beyond his widely panned debate performance, a little more than a week before he'll be on the ballot in more than a dozen states on Super Tuesday. Since the debate, Bloomberg has seen his favorability ratings drop in one poll, faced renewed attention to the work environment for women at his company, and been targeted by the liberal activist group MoveOn. Late Friday, Twitter announced that it had suspended 70 pro-Bloomberg accounts for possible violations of its rules on platform manipulation.
- **Steyer Qualifies for South Carolina Debate:** Billionaire Tom Steyer became the seventh candidate to qualify for the Democratic presidential debate tomorrow night in South Carolina, his campaign said in a statement. Steyer, who didn't qualify for the Nevada debate last week, made the cut by garnering 18% in a CBS News/YouGov South Carolina poll released yesterday. To qualify, candidates need to have won a delegate to the national convention from Iowa, New Hampshire or Nevada, or have reached at least 10% in at least four national polls or 12% in two polls in South Carolina.
- **Pence's Campaign Has Already Begun:** Trump's bid for a second term in office is giving Mike Pence an early edge in the race that's already shaping up for the Republican nomination in 2024. Pence has lately been a mainstay at Trump's signature campaign rallies, seldom missing the opportunity to introduce the president while test-driving a few crowd-pleasing lines of his own. The vice president has his own political action committee and has

been steadily expanding his travel as a surrogate for Trump, with a particular focus on Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania.

- He's scheduled to embark on a bus tour through Michigan tomorrow without the president, who's in India. It will include a speech to supporters in a hotel ballroom -- a sort of mini-rally.
- **Sanders Unveils \$1.5 Trillion Plan for Child Care:** Sanders today unveiled a \$1.5 trillion proposal for free universal child care and pre-kindergarten programs that would be funded through a tax on "extreme wealth." The idea of universal child care has been a staple of his stump speech, but the proposal fleshes out the details of how it would be implemented and paid for. Under his plan, all children from infancy would have access to full-day, full-week, high-quality child care and would enter pre-kindergarten beginning at 3 years old, "regardless of income."
- **Biden Sets \$640 Billion Housing Plan:** Biden today unveiled a \$640 billion housing plan that includes tax credits for first-time homebuyers and low-income renters, as well as more federal assistance for the country's poorest renters. The former vice president's team sees his proposals as especially important in aiding African Americans and Latinos, two advisers said on the condition of anonymity. The plan was released less than a week before the South Carolina primary, where more than half of Democratic voters are black, but also before California -- which is facing a dramatic housing and homelessness crisis -- casts its primary votes on March 3.
- **Soak-the-Rich Tax Plans Take Hold Among Democrats:** Sanders and Warren would bring one of the most progressive tax agendas in history to the White House if either of them were to become president. So would every other Democrat vying for the presidency. Significantly higher taxes on Wall Street, wealthy individuals, corporations and capital gains have long been fixtures on progressive wish lists. In the 2020 campaign, some form of those ideas appear in every major presidential candidate's tax plan, including Bloomberg, a late entry to the race.
- **Sanders Tells Putin to Stay Out After Briefing on Meddling:** Sanders warned Russian President Vladimir Putin Friday to stay out of U.S. elections after confirming that American intelligence officials had briefed him last month on Russian efforts to help his presidential campaign. "Mr. Putin is a thug. He is an autocrat. He may be a friend of Donald Trump -- he's not a friend of mine," Sanders told reporters in Bakersfield, Calif.
 - Sanders said that he received the intelligence briefing about a month ago. But it didn't become public until a Washington Post report on Friday that said Trump and lawmakers on Capitol Hill had also been informed of the Russian involvement.
 - Meanwhile, Vice President Mike Pence's chief of staff dismissed reports that U.S. intelligence agencies warned Congress Russia is seeking to interfere in the election to help return Trump to the White House. "There's not been an assertion that Russia is trying to benefit Donald Trump" in this year's election, Marc Short said yesterday on NBC's "Meet the Press."

- **Trump Offers Tepid Support to Mulvaney:** Trump offered tepid support for Mick Mulvaney, days after the acting White House chief of staff made candid comments in the U.K. that broke with elements of the administration's policies. "Yeah, he's here now, sure, no problem," Trump told reporters outside the White House as he prepared to depart for India, when asked if he still had confidence in the former South Carolina congressman.

 - Mulvaney told a private gathering last week that the Trump administration "needs more immigrants" for the U.S. economy to grow, according to comments obtained by the Washington Post. "We are running out of people to fuel the economic growth that we've had in our nation over the last four years. We need more immigrants," Mulvaney reportedly said. Trump has sought to reduce both undocumented and legal immigration to the U.S.
- **Deadline Approaching for Regulatory Guidance:** Anyone looking for all of the guidance, notices, and letters that federal agencies use to explain regulations should be able to find it on searchable websites by the end of this week, if agencies meet their deadline. Trump last October signed a pair of executive orders intended to rein in agency guidance documents, defined broadly as all the ways agency officials explain regulations under their jurisdiction. One order required agencies to post all their guidance – including letters, adjudication decisions, or even press releases – on one easily accessible website.
- **Immigration Policies Spark Decline in Asylum Pipeline:** Immigration data that Congress mandated in December spending legislation suggests Trump administration policies are having a dramatic effect on reducing the number of migrants getting asylum. About 38% of migrants interviewed for the first step of the application process, known as establishing "credible fear of persecution," were approved during the first half of January, according to a Bloomberg Government analysis of cases that received a denial or affirmative decision. That number is down from a high of more than 91% during the first half of February last year.
- **Congress Returns:** The Senate returns from a weeklong recess today with votes teed up on nominations and two abortion-related measures that stand little chance of becoming law. The House returns tomorrow and plans to vote on an anti-lynching measure and legislation to ban the sale of more vaping products, among other measures.

 - House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) on Friday laid out the chamber's schedule for the work period in a letter to colleagues. Next week, the House plans votes on legislation that aims to enhance benefits and workplace protections for Transportation Security Administration personnel. The following week, March 9, the House plans to vote on legislation to roll back Trump's travel ban. Other legislation on Hoyer's radar includes reauthorization of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act before it expires later in March, a Senate-passed resolution restricting Trump's war powers, and potentially a measure addressing surprise medical billing.
- **EV Industry Fears Build Over Tax Perk:** Companies like Tesla and General Motors that have relied on an electric vehicle tax credit to boost sales now face mounting uncertainty

amid scrutiny of the perk and resistance to expanding it. Tesla and General Motors have already hit the number of vehicles that can be sold before the \$7,500-per-vehicle credit for customers starts disappearing – meaning that Congress would have to expand the credit for the two U.S. companies to fully benefit from it again. The chance of that happening this year is slim: the credit has become a political football, with the Senate’s top tax writer blaming Democrats’ interest in the perk for the demise of year-end tax bill negotiations.

- **Mnuchin Says Congress Hurdle to EU’s Digital Tax Demands:** European finance chiefs arrived at a meeting of their global peers in Riyadh demanding the urgent creation of a new global tax system for the 21st century that would capture the profits of tech multinationals. But while finance ministers from France and Germany were among those expressing confidence at this weekend’s Group of 20 meeting of finance chiefs that a compromise could be found in time, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin warned that he is somewhat hamstrung. “Let me emphasize: in the U. S., depending upon what the solutions are, these may require congressional approval,” he said during a discussion, sitting alongside France’s Bruno Le Maire.
- **U.S. to Argue in Court on Behalf of 1998 Kenya Victims:** The Trump administration is poised to argue before the Supreme Court that victims of the 1998 bombing of the U.S. embassy in Nairobi should be compensated by Sudan, which at that time harbored the attack’s plotters, Osama bin Laden and other al Qaeda members. In a session scheduled today, Trump’s solicitor general will add the weight of the federal government to the civil suit brought by the families of embassy employees killed in the blast, giving a significant boost to their cause.
- **Encouraging Illegal Immigration on Trial:** Grandparents, preachers, and human rights activists face prison time if the U.S. Supreme Court condones a law punishing those who encourage illegal immigration, advocacy groups warn ahead of an upcoming argument in Washington. The Trump Administration, challenging an appellate ruling that struck down the measure, contends that those concerns are overblown – that the government is going after grifters, not grandmas. The justices will try to reconcile these competing narratives at oral arguments tomorrow, where they’ll confront a trifecta of perennially potent topics: crime and punishment, free speech, and the definitive Trump-era issue of immigration.
- **Stone Judge Rejects Request for Her Recusal:** Judge Amy Berman Jackson rejected a request from Roger Stone to recuse herself from his request for a retrial, saying it was “not warranted.” The Republican operative’s lawyers said in a late Friday filing that statements the judge made about the jury during a sentencing hearing show a “strong bias.” The judge, who sentenced Stone on Thursday to 40 months in prison, has yet to rule on his request for a retrial.
- **Trump Says Taliban Agreement ‘Holding Up’:** Trump said he’s willing to sign a peace deal with the Taliban but he wants to see whether a preliminary agreement to reduce violence in Afghanistan is successful. “We think they want to make a deal, we want to make a deal. I

think it's going to work out," Trump told reporters yesterday as he departed the White House for India. "We're right now in a period that's been holding up. You know we have a certain period of nonviolence, it's been holding up it's a day and a half, so we'll see what happens."

- **U.S. Bombs Al-Shabaab Compound in Somalia:** U.S. Africa Command bombed an al-Shabaab compound near Dujuuma, Somalia, yesterday, the seventh in a series of strikes on the terrorist group this month in operations coordinated with the Somalia government. Three militants were wounded, per a U.S. assessment, a day after two others were killed and one wounded at a compound near Saakow, Somalia, and four days after a strike killed three people near Wadajir, Somalia. No civilians were injured or killed, per a U.S. assessment.