

# American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Tuesday, February 25, 2020

(The following information comes from Bloomberg Government Website)

## Schedules: White House and Congress

### WHITE HOUSE

- 9am: President Trump, First Lady Melania Trump visit India's presidential palace, participate in courtesy call with India's president, attend State Banquet
- 11:30am: Trump, First Lady depart New Delhi

### CONGRESS

- Senate meets at 10am; to resume consideration of judicial nominees and Katharine MacGregor to be Deputy Interior Secretary.
  - Senate to recess from 12:30pm to 2:15pm for weekly caucus meetings
  - Senate to also consider S. 3275, which would ban abortions after 20 weeks with exceptions for rape, incest or to save the mother's life
- House meets at 2pm, but no votes expected until Wednesday

## Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Family Caregivers' Wellbeing:** The Senate yesterday unanimously passed a bill (S. 995) by Sens. Susan Collins (R-Maine) and Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.) to "support the health and wellbeing of family caregivers," Collins said in a statement. The measure would authorize \$10 million a year for the Lifespan Respite Care program from fiscal 2020 through fiscal 2024, according to the statement. The bill awaits action in the House.
- **Health Group Touts Grassley Drug Bill:** One of the most vocal health advocacy groups on Capitol Hill is spending over \$2 million in an ad campaign supporting Senate Finance Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) and top Democrat Ron Wyden's (D-Ore.) drug-pricing legislation. Patients for Affordable Drugs said it's pumping more money into television ads that focus on the high cost of insulin and chemotherapy drugs.
  - The group pushed similar ads in October for a trio of drug measures, including the Grassley-Wyden package, House Democrats' bill, and Trump's International Pricing Index plan. This round is focused solely on the package by Grassley and Wyden. Part of the strategy is highlighting Republicans who have signed onto the bipartisan package, including Sen. Joni Ernst (R-Iowa). The group is also currently airing ads in favor of Sen. Martha McSally (R-Ariz.), who endorsed the Grassley-Wyden bill this month.
- **Sanders Takes Lead After Nevada:** Sanders won 24 delegates from Nevada, doubling his total haul in the Democratic presidential primary from the three early-state contests held so far. With a first-place victory in Saturday's Nevada caucuses, Sanders now has 45 delegates

while Buttigieg has 25, Biden has 15, Sen. Elizabeth Warren (Mass.) has eight and Sen. Amy Klobuchar (Minn.) has seven, according to The Associated Press.

- **Sanders Defends Praise of Castro's Programs:** Sanders yesterday defended comments he made to CBS's "60 Minutes" praising Fidel Castro for literacy programs he introduced in Cuba. "There were a lot of folks in Cuba at that point who were illiterate. He formed the literacy brigade," Sanders said at a CNN town hall in Charleston. Castro, he added, "went out and they helped people learn to read and write. You know what, I think teaching people to read and write is a good thing."
- **Trump Allies' Battle in Georgia Prompts Republican Jitters:** Trump so far hasn't been able to head off a drawn-out Republican brawl for a U.S. Senate seat in Georgia that pits two candidates he's praised against each other and triggered jitters within the party about potentially losing the seat in November. The conflict's been brewing since Georgia's GOP Governor Brian Kemp chose businesswoman Kelly Loeffler in December to temporarily fill an open Senate seat, despite lobbying from the president to pick four-term Rep. Doug Collins (R-Ga.), who's now waging a primary fight. Collins last week rejected Trump's attempt to lure him away from challenging Loeffler by floating the idea of making him a candidate to become the next U.S. spy chief. Hours after Trump made the surprise announcement, Collins said no. "I'm running a Senate race down here in Georgia," he said.
  - The concern for Republicans is that a bitter fight between Republican candidates provides an opening for Democrats. The Georgia race is crucial to the GOP's bid to keep the Senate majority it has held since 2015. Republicans will be defending 23 seats in November, compared with 12 for Democrats. A net pickup of four seats by Democrats would guarantee them the majority.
- **Inhofe on Re-Election:** Senate Armed Services Chairman Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.) said he will announce March 6 whether he'll be running for re-election this year. Inhofe said he's focused on running the committee because once you announce re-election plans, "you are a candidate," and not a chairman, he told reporters at a roundtable in his Washington office yesterday. Inhofe said that he expects "there will be a lot of people running against me."
- **DOD Touts A.I. Ethics Code:** The Pentagon adopted new ethical guidelines this week for the use of artificial intelligence that officials say could ease concerns in Silicon Valley that troubled its earlier work on the cutting-edge technology. Google decided not to renew its contract work in 2018 on the Pentagon's Project Maven, a program that analyzes and sorts thousands of hours of drone video surveillance footage, when its employees balked over the ethics of using AI to target potentially lethal military air strikes.
  - The five broad new rules approved by Defense Secretary Mark Esper lay down ethical guardrails for the technology. They require that Defense personnel will make responsible choices; develop reliable and secure systems; make traceable decisions understood by operators; avoid bias in capabilities; and be governable so the AI can be shut down if problems arise.

- **Amazon Adopts Rivals' Playbook to Fight JEDI Cloud Bid Loss:** A powerful executive with Amazon in October portrayed attempts by archrival Oracle to block her company from winning one of the biggest-ever government deals as a last-ditch attempt to rescue a business that was becoming irrelevant. Now, Amazon is borrowing a page from the playbook Oracle used to unseat it as the front-runner for an up to \$10 billion, 10-year project to overhaul the military's technological operations.
  - Amazon filed suit in federal court in November after the Pentagon, in a surprise move, on Oct. 25 awarded the contract to Microsoft. Amazon asserted that the procurement was corrupted by the intervention of Trump, whose disdain for Jeff Bezos, its chairman and chief executive officer, is widely known. "Amazon is going to the mattresses," said Stan Soloway, a deputy undersecretary of defense under President Bill Clinton and now president of Celero Strategies, a Washington-area consulting firm. "It feels like the same scorched-earth approach" that Oracle took.
- **U.S.-South Korea Talks on Sharing Costs Stalled:** The U.S. and South Korea remain stalled after six rounds of talks on an updated cost-sharing agreement, but the allies' top defense officials said they hope to break that deadlock next month. "We are engaged in negotiations," and the "minister and I are hopeful they will reach agreement soon, preferably before the end of March," Defense Secretary Mark Esper said at a news conference alongside South Korea's Defense Minister Jeong Kyeong-doo after they met yesterday at the Pentagon.
  - If not, Jeong said, South Korean civilians who provide services to U.S. forces will start to be furloughed on April 1 for lack of funds. The countries are at an impasse over Trump's demand that the South Koreans contribute much more than in the past for the American troops stationed in a joint defense against threats from North Korea. "Shouldering the cost of our common defense cannot fall disproportionately to the American taxpayer," Esper said, echoing a burden-sharing complaint that Trump also makes consistently about NATO allies. "South Korea can and should contribute more," he added.
- **Italy, Iran Coronavirus Cases Jump:** Iran reported a total of 15 deaths from the coronavirus, the most fatalities outside China. Italy, the outbreak's epicenter in Europe, said infections in the Lombardy region rose to 206 from 172. Earlier today, South Korea reported 84 new infections for a total tally of 977, making it the country with most cases outside of China. The U.S., Japan and Hong Kong issued travel warnings for South Korea, while the United Arab Emirates banned flights to all Iranian cities.
  - The head of the World Health Organization had earlier called the new cases "deeply concerning," but said the outbreak isn't yet a pandemic. China plans to release results from clinical trials of a Gilead Sciences drug in April.
  - There are now 53 people in the U.S. with the novel coronavirus, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced yesterday. Those include 12 people who tested positive for the condition after traveling to places where the coronavirus is spreading widely. Additionally, two spouses of people in that group were infected by direct human-to-human transmission. Another three were diagnosed after being repatriated from Wuhan, China, on State Department flights, while 36 had previously been aboard the contaminated Diamond Princess cruise ship.

- Biotechnology company Moderna announced yesterday it has released the first batch of mRNA-1273, the company's vaccine against the coronavirus, for human use. Vials of mRNA-1273 have been shipped over to the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases to be used in the planned Phase 1 study in the U.S.