

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Thursday, February 25, 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

- 12:30pm: Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris have lunch
- 1:45pm: Biden, Harris receive Covid-19 briefing
- 2:30pm: Biden, Harris participate in event commemorating 50 millionth Covid-19 vaccine shot
- 4:30pm: Biden delivers remarks during the National Governors Association Winter Meeting
- 12:00pm: Press Sec. Jen Psaki holds press briefing

CONGRESS

- U.S. House convenes at 10am and resumes consideration of H.R. 5, a bill to expand protections for the LGBT community, with first votes expected around 2pm
- U.S. Senate convenes at 11am
 - 12pm: Senate debates, votes on confirmation of Jennifer Granholm to be Energy secretary
 - 1:30: Senate votes on procedural motion to invoke cloture on nomination of Miguel Cardona to be Education secretary
- 2:15pm: House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, along with other members of Congress, hold press conference ahead of House vote on the Equality Act

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Infrastructure Push Stirs Worries Over Cost, Bipartisanship:** Members of both parties are aiming for a bipartisan infrastructure package, even as some Democrats discuss a scope that could lose Republican support. House Transportation and Infrastructure Chair Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) said that Democrats are working on a “transformative bill” that will include policy changes, but didn’t elaborate. “I don’t think you’re going to see a status quo bill out of either the House or the Senate,” he said yesterday.
- **The Hill: Becerra Says He Wants To 'Build On' ObamaCare When Pressed On Medicare For All:** Health and Human Services secretary nominee Xavier Becerra pointed to President Biden's opposition to "Medicare for All" on Wednesday when pressed on his own support for the idea, saying he would follow the lead of the White House.

- Bloomberg Government: NIH, FDA Target Barriers to Rare Disease Drugs:** Drug companies pursuing gene therapies for rare diseases could have a new financial model that makes developing these cutting-edge, lifesaving treatments more sustainable. Francis S. Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health, said that the agency is looking at expanding an existing partnership with industry and nonprofits to focus on gene therapies for ultra rare diseases that may affect only a few people – and therefore a commercial incentive for treatments is lacking.
- The Washington Post: Doctors And Nurses Face Endless Covid Misinformation Battle:** Atul Nakhasi couldn't stop thinking about Dodger Stadium. The storied ballpark-turned-coronavirus-vaccination-site just 10 minutes from his apartment in downtown Los Angeles had been briefly shut down by anti-vaccine protesters, and Nakhasi, a doctor, was horrified. To him, the nearly hour-long delay amounted to an act of "public harm" and served as a chilling example of how far people who oppose vaccines are willing to go to make their point. He had to do something to respond, but what?
- Bloomberg Government: Murthy, Levine Nominations:** The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee scheduled a hearing today to consider the nominations of Vivek Murthy, former U.S. Surgeon General under Barack Obama, to reprise the position under Biden; and Rachel Levine, former Pennsylvania Secretary of Health, to serve as assistant HHS secretary.
- Bloomberg Government: Biden Revokes Trump-Era Orders:** Biden revoked a series of executive orders and memos issued by Trump, affecting policies on financial regulation, immigration, funding for "anarchist" cities and architecture. The actions were Biden's latest to erase Trump's legacy and reset the nation's course, without any involvement by Congress. In Biden's first week in office alone, he issued 39 executive actions, many of which overturned Trump orders.

 - The orders revoked by Biden include a 2017 measure signed by Trump directing the government to streamline regulations affecting the financial services industry, part of an effort to roll back the impact of the Dodd-Frank Act.
 - Biden also issued a proclamation rescinding immigration bans implemented by the Trump administration ostensibly to protect American jobs in the face of the pandemic-caused financial downturn. Biden issued the edict yesterday, noting that the Trump bans didn't "advance the interests" of the country. "To the contrary, it harms the United States," Biden said.
- Bloomberg Government: House Democrats Unveil Updated Aid Bill:** House Democrats released an updated version of their coronavirus aid bill yesterday, adding funds for foreign aid, tribal governments, tribal housing, and other provisions ahead of a vote this week. House Budget Chair John Yarmuth (D-Ky.) filed a manager's amendment that added three sections previously cut out of the committees on Foreign Affairs, Natural Resources, and Science, Space, and Technology.

 - Most of the funds in the sections is under an \$8.7 billion pot for foreign aid, including for Covid-19 vaccine distribution, HIV/AIDS prevention, and disaster relief. The measure also adds \$580 million that could head to the United Nations Global Humanitarian Response Plan for Covid-19, and \$500 million for migrant and refugee relief.

- The nation's hospitals want the relief bill that House Democrats could pass this week to include \$35 billion in targeted emergency funding for hospitals across the country. With only \$4.4 billion expected to remain in the CARES Act provider relief fund by the end of March, hospital officials say it's imperative that the stimulus bill include direct, targeted assistance for hospitals.
- Biden's White House is targeting key states in an appeal for public support for his pandemic-relief bill, an effort aimed at both solidifying crucial votes and test-running what's set to be an even tougher sales job on his next stimulus package. Biden and his lieutenants are pitching the giant bill to mayors, governors, state treasurers and tribal leaders, along with workers and the business community. The administration is focusing on roughly 13 key states -- including Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Arizona and Georgia.
- **FierceHealthcare: Kaufman Hall: Hospitals Could Lose Between \$53B And \$122B This Year Due To Pandemic:** Hospitals could lose between \$53 billion and \$122 billion due to the lingering effects of COVID-19, depending on the speed of vaccine distribution and complete recovery of patient volumes, according to a new report from Kaufman Hall. The report, released Wednesday and commissioned by the American Hospital Association (AHA), details several factors that will continue to depress hospital finances this year. The report comes as the AHA is pressing Congress to include more money for the provider relief fund in its next package.