

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Wednesday, February 3, 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

- President Biden has no public events scheduled
- 9:30am: VP Kamala Harris swears in Pete Buttigieg as Secretary of Transportation
- 11am: White House Covid-19 response team, including Covid-19 response coordinator Jeff Zients and Biden's chief medical adviser Anthony Fauci, hold press briefing
- 1:30pm: Press Sec. Jen Psaki holds briefing

CONGRESS

- House meets at 1pm; to vote on budget resolution H. Con. Res. 11
- Senate meets at 9am; resumes consideration of S. Con. Res. 5, budget resolution

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: U.S. Economy Is Improving, Complicating Biden's Stimulus Plans:** The U.S. economy is showing some scattered signs of picking up from an end-of-year slowdown, muddying Biden's efforts to win congressional passage of a \$1.9 trillion stimulus package. New claims filed for unemployment benefits have fallen for two straight weeks, while January payrolls are forecast to rebound from a December swoon in data out on Friday. Selected high frequency data, such as weekly consumer confidence readings and restaurant bookings, also point to some strengthening, as virus infections ebb and business restrictions are eased.
- **NPR: White House Will Send Vaccines Directly To Retail Pharmacies:** The Biden administration has announced that it will begin shipping about 1 million COVID-19 vaccine doses a week directly to thousands of pharmacies in an attempt to address equity concerns and speed up the country's crucial inoculation effort. The vaccines sent to pharmacies will be in addition to the millions of doses sent weekly to states, territories and tribes and that are sometimes administered at local pharmacies. The program will begin on Feb. 11 on a limited basis, with vaccines sent to about 6,500 stores nationwide, Jeff Zients, the White House's COVID-19 response coordinator, told reporters on Tuesday. He said that the effort would then scale up and that eventually up to 40,000 retail pharmacies, including Walgreens, CVS and Rite Aid locations, would receive doses directly from the federal government.
- **Bloomberg Government: Democrats Plan Debt Limit Suspension With Budget Move:** House Democrats plan to act later this year to suspend the debt ceiling through September 2022 using a process that ties the measure to a vote on a budget resolution, according to a committee aide. They intend to use a House rule that treats a vote to adopt a budget resolution also as a vote to lift the debt ceiling for the full fiscal year, a spokeswoman for House Budget Democrats said in an email.

- **Modern Healthcare: Biden Admin To Review Rule Discouraging Immigrants From Using Medicaid:** Health and immigration advocates cheered the Biden administration's announcement Tuesday that it will review a Trump-era rule that allowed immigrants' use of Medicaid and other public programs to weigh against their residency applications. The White House's instruction that agencies review the so-called public charge rule was tucked into a broader executive order the administration said is designed to restore faith in the country's legal immigration system and promote integration of new Americans.
- **Bloomberg Government: Democrats Want \$10 Billion for Medical Supplies:** Sens. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.) and Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) yesterday unveiled legislation to provide a "\$10 billion investment in rapidly expanding the domestic manufacturing for pandemic supplies" to help support Biden's ability to invoke the Defense Production Act to accelerate the manufacturing of materials needed to fight the pandemic.
- **Stat: How Should Biopharma Companies Respond To Drug Price Controls?:** As the Biden administration assumes leadership in Washington and former President Donald Trump's most-favored nation ruling has been halted by a federal judge, drug price controls don't feel imminent. Though this should provide some relief to the R&D-based biopharmaceutical industry, the relief may be short-lived.
- **Modern Healthcare: Most Consumers Hit With High Bills After Just One Healthcare Visit, Study Says:** Healthcare costs exceeded \$400 during at least one month for more than a quarter of Americans in 2017, ballooning far above the amount Federal Reserve estimates that most U.S. consumers have saved for surprise expenses, according to a new study in Health Affairs. By analyzing office, inpatient and pharmacist reports, study authors found that most consumers incurred the majority of their care costs in just two months of the year. Of the 18 million people studied using the 2017 IBM MarketScan Commercial Claims and Encounters database, researchers found that 83% of enrollees paid an average of \$954 in out-of-pocket healthcare costs, while 17% reported no out-of-pocket healthcare costs