

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Wednesday, February 5, 2020

(The following information comes from Bloomberg Government Website)

Schedules: White House and Congress

WHITE HOUSE

- President Trump has no public events scheduled; has lunch with Defense Sec. Mark Esper at 12:30pm

CONGRESS

- Senate set to vote to acquit Trump on impeachment articles
- House meets at noon for legislative business with first votes expected from 4:30pm
- House to consider H.R. 1132, on San Francisco Bay Restoration; also to consider H.R. 4031, on Great Lakes Restoration
- 10am: House Judiciary Committee hears from FBI Director Christopher Wray at oversight hearing

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Drug-Pricing Call Faces Uphill Battle:** The effort to enact legislation reducing drug prices will remain fractured despite Trump's call for unity on the issue. Trump highlighted his administration's work to lower the price of drugs. He credited Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) with working on it, although he fell short of endorsing the Finance Committee chairman's drug-pricing package. Trump called on Congress to "get something done," asking for legislation without singling out a particular bill. "I am calling for bipartisan legislation that achieves the goal of dramatically lowering prescription drug prices," Trump said. "Get a bill on my desk, and I will sign it into law immediately."
- **New Medicine Caucus:** Sens. Tim Scott (R-S.C.) and Kyrsten Sinema (D-Ariz.) and Reps. Eric Swalwell (D-Calif.) and Tom Emmer (R-Minn.) launched a new Congressional Personalized Medicine Caucus that won support from the Personalized Medicine Coalition. The group will hold a Feb. 26 briefing to formally announce the caucus that will "educate Congress and the public about the benefits of earlier detection, targeted treatment, and improved prevention strategies in personalized medicine," according to a PMC statement.
- **Trump And Pelosi Trade Snubs:** As Trump took to the dais, he turned his back on Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) as she offered to shake his hand. When he concluded his remarks, Pelosi could be seen directly behind the president, ripping up a printed transcript of his speech. The core of Trump's remarks, though, were U.S. economic growth -- the pillar of his campaign for re-election in 2020 and what he called "the great American comeback."

- **School Choice Plan Touted:** Trump is calling for an ambitious new \$5 billion annual tax credit for private scholarship programs to support school choice. The president urged lawmakers to pass legislation creating the “Education Freedom Scholarship” program that has become a top priority for Education Secretary Betsy DeVos over the past year. “The next step forward in building an inclusive society is making sure that every young American gets a great education and the opportunity to achieve the American Dream,” Trump said. “Yet, for too long, countless American children have been trapped in failing government schools.”
- **Trump Backs Paid Leave Bill:** Trump hailed his administration’s “pro-worker” agenda and for the first time called on Congress to pass specific legislation to create a national paid family leave program in his latest State of the Union address. “In just three short years, we have shattered the mentality of American decline, and we have rejected the downsizing of America’s destiny,” Trump said. He said the administration has helped reduce unemployment in part by slashing “job killing regulations.”
 - The president also called on lawmakers to pass the Advancing Support for Working Families Act, sponsored by Sens. Bill Cassidy (R-La.) and Kyrsten Sinema (D-Ariz.). The measure would use a tax credit to extend paid leave benefits to private sector workers.
- **Senate Highway Bill Gets Nod:** Lawmakers should pass the bipartisan Senate surface transportation bill, Trump said, though he didn’t offer a way to pay for the \$287 billion proposal. Trump promoted the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee bill, nearly one week after Democrats challenged the White House to reach an agreement with them to pay for their broader, \$760 billion infrastructure plan. “We must also rebuild America’s infrastructure,” Trump said.
- **Trump Takes Immigration Victory Lap:** Trump used the speech to trumpet campaign promises on immigration policies that have drastically abated border crossings but also all but cut off asylum in the U.S. “My administration has undertaken an unprecedented effort to secure the southern border of the United States,” Trump said. “If you come illegally, you will now be promptly removed from our country.”
 - A relentless string of initiatives in 2019 reduced to a trickle the historic surge of migrant families that were crossing the southwest border at this time a year ago. Favorable court decisions for those policies from Trump-picked judges as well as inaction by Congress to pass major immigration legislation left the White House an open path to move its agenda ahead.
- **‘Trillion Trees’ Plan:** Trump elevated a global tree-planting initiative in his speech, calling the Trillion Tree Initiative “an ambitious effort to bring together government and the private sector to plant new trees in America and all around the world.” The World Economic Forum initiative would restore, conserve, or plant a trillion trees globally by 2030.

- **Buttigieg Leads in Iowa Caucuses:** Pete Buttigieg maintained his lead in the Iowa caucuses after a second tranche of results was released last night, cementing his status as a credible contender after an extraordinary rise from the little-known mayor of a small Indiana city to the top tier of the presidential race. With 71% of precincts reporting, Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) was a close second with his promises to deliver Medicare for All and lead a political revolution against wealth inequality.
 - The results were a major setback for Joe Biden, who was in fourth place behind Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.).
 - Addressing supporters in New Hampshire, the state with the next presidential contest, Buttigieg, 38, leaned into his relative youth, saying, “Every time that we have earned that Oval Office it has been with a candidate that’s focused on the future, new in politics, offering a different vision.”
- **‘We Feel Really Terrible,’ App Makers Say:** The chief executive of the technology company whose app threw the Iowa caucuses into disarray Monday night defended his company but apologized for a technological glitch that angered candidates, left voters baffled and upended the opening act of the 2020 Democratic presidential primary. “I’m really disappointed that some of our technology created an issue that made the caucus difficult,” said Gerard Niemira, the CEO of political technology company Shadow Inc., in his first interview after the caucus. “We feel really terrible about that.”
 - The Iowa Democratic Party contracted with Shadow to build an app to help the party quickly compile results in the state’s 1,765 precincts. But on Monday night, the system quickly broke down. Niemira said the problem first became apparent at around 7:45 p.m. when volunteers tried to submit their results, and the Iowa Democratic Party’s automated quality control checks discovered “anomalies in transmission reports.” The breakdown, he said, wasn’t with the app itself but in the way Shadow transmitted data to the Iowa Democratic Party.
- **Biden Slump in Iowa May Signal Bigger Woes:** Biden has staked his campaign on the argument that he is best positioned to ride anti-Trump sentiment to a victory in the general election. But his poor showing in the Iowa caucus raises questions about that strategy and whether he has the campaign structure to drive momentum into later states. With about two-thirds of the precincts reporting, Barack Obama’s vice president was sitting in fourth place, behind Buttigieg, Sanders and Warren. Moderate Democrats looking for someone to unseat Trump may be scared off by Biden’s inability to stop Sanders in early states and turn to the fresh-faced Buttigieg, who has painted himself as a centrist alternative from the heartland.
- **Sanders, Biden Lead N.H. Poll:** Sanders and Biden are tied for first place in the latest New Hampshire survey by the New Hampshire Institute of Politics at Saint Anselm College. A poll of 491 registered voters who say they intend to vote next week found Sanders and Biden each had 19% support, a jump of 10 percentage points for Sanders since the college’s November poll.

- **Bloomberg Tries to Capitalize on Iowa Chaos:** Former New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg is doubling his already unprecedented television advertising budget and boosting his field staff in a push to capitalize on the chaos in Iowa's caucus. Bloomberg, who's skipping all contests this month, immediately hiked spending on ads in markets where they are currently airing and starting ads in new ones, the campaign said. It said it also expects to increase its field staff soon to 2,100.
- **Mfume Wins Maryland Democratic Primary:** Former NAACP CEO Kweisi Mfume won the special Democratic primary for Maryland's 7th congressional district, AP projected last night. The winner is favored to succeed the late Rep. Elijah Cummings, who died last October, in the April 28 special general election for the Baltimore-area U.S. House seat. There were 24 Democrats on the ballot in the primary for the overwhelmingly Democratic district. Other candidates included Maya Rockey Moore Cummings, the late congressman's widow, state Sen. Jill Carter and state Reps. Talmadge Branch, Terri Hill, and Jay Jalisi. Republican Kimberly Klacik also won her party's primary.
- **Twitter to Label, Remove 'Deepfakes':** Twitter will start labeling, and in some cases removing, doctored or manipulated media that users share on the social media platform beginning next month. That policy includes "deepfake" videos that have been edited using artificial intelligence or other advanced software to distort a person's appearance or speech while appearing to be authentic, as well as other kinds of edited photos and videos that have been "substantially edited," the company said yesterday in a blog post.
- **Ex-Rep. Paulsen Joins Total Spectrum:** Former Rep. Erik Paulsen (R-Minn.) has joined Total Spectrum/Steve Gordon and Associates as a strategic consultant, it announced in a statement yesterday. The public relations firm handles political strategy, communications and advocacy – but has no registered lobbyists – and counts the Cancer Treatment Centers of America, American Automotive Leasing Association, Reynolds American and Total Wine among its clients, according to the firm's website, Megan R. Wilson reports.
 - Paulsen, who once served as chairman of the Joint Economic Committee and sat on the House Ways and Means Committee, lost his 2018 re-election bid and last year was named honorary co-chairman of the Pass USMCA Coalition, a group of businesses and trade groups that pushed for the trade deal.
- **U.S. Readies for Coronavirus Pandemic Seen as Likely:** Just a couple of weeks ago, scientists held out hope the new coronavirus could be largely contained within China. Now they know its spread can be minimized at best, and governments are planning for the worst. "It is not a matter of if – it is a matter of when," said Amesh Adalja, a senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins University Center for Health Security and a spokesman for the Infectious Diseases Society of America. "There is not a doubt this is going to end up in most countries eventually."
 - The U.S., with 11 diagnosed cases so far, plans to quarantine at military bases potentially more than 1,000 Americans evacuated from China's Hubei province. State health departments are activating emergency programs to isolate the

potentially infected – a piecemeal approach that could range from specialized facilities to hotels. Some hospitals have tents in stock to use as emergency isolation wards.

- **Space Force Won't Exceed \$2B Estimate:** The total cost of the new Space Force will stay within an initial estimate of \$2 billion through fiscal 2024 in the Defense Department's upcoming budget request, an update sent to Congress yesterday shows. The Air Force told lawmakers it's pursuing a streamlined service that will not exceed expected costs as it provided the most up-to-date plans, which now include more detailed leadership structure with four general officers, a training agreement with the Air Force Academy, and plans for Space Force Centers.
- **Lawmakers Nominate Hong Kong Protesters for Nobel Prize:** A bipartisan group of prominent U.S. lawmakers has nominated Hong Kong's pro-democracy protesters for the Nobel Peace Prize, a move that could anger China amid continued tensions between the two countries. In a letter to the Nobel Peace Prize committee, Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) and Rep. Jim McGovern (D-Mass.) -- the heads of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China -- recommended awarding the prize to the "countless and often anonymous individuals [who] risked their lives, their health, their jobs, and their education to support a better future for Hong Kong.
- **Embassy Attack Victims Get Award Against Iran:** Hundreds of victims of U.S. Embassy attacks in Lebanon in the 1980s and their families convinced a federal judge in Washington yesterday to approve the \$1.5 billion award in their lawsuit against Iran. The lawsuit filed in 2016 stems from two terrorist attacks targeting American embassy workers and service members in Lebanon in 1983 and 1984.
- **Trump's Second War on Regulation May Tie Up EPA in Red Tape:** Trump declared war on regulations in his first term, ordering that for every new rule issued two others had to be eliminated. And even as Trump celebrated "slashing a record number of job-killing regulations" in his speech last night, he's readying a second effort: limiting the power of federal regulators such as the Environmental Protection Agency and the Securities and Exchange Commission to go after companies accused of wrongdoing. The White House calls it an effort to protect citizens from unjust government actions, but critics say it would dilute safeguards for workers, investors and the environment.
 - The potential changes, telegraphed in a request for comment published last week and a "transparency and fairness" executive order Trump signed last fall, target how federal agencies go after corporate rule-breakers and could confer an array of new protections on the accused.
- **News Groups Urge Against Data-Lockup Changes:** Attorneys for Bloomberg News and four other media organizations asked the U.S. Department of Labor to withdraw its proposal to restrict journalists' early access to major economic reports, arguing that a ban on using computers would benefit high-frequency traders and violate First Amendment press

protections. The plan “is very likely to have the opposite of the intended effect and have a material negative effect on the public in the form of less timely reporting and analysis,” according to the letter from attorneys Christine Walz and Jennifer Mansfield of the firm Holland & Knight.