

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Tuesday, February 9, 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

- 1:45pm: President Biden, Treasury Sec. Janet Yellen meet with business leaders at the White House
- 12:45pm: Press Sec. Jen Psaki holds briefing at White House
- Biden's Justice Department is preparing to ask most U.S. attorneys appointed by former President Donald Trump to resign their positions while asking two officials working on politically sensitive cases to stay on; DOJ plans to make request to Trump nominees as early as today

CONGRESS

- Senate meets at 1pm to resume impeachment trial of former President Donald Trump; to consider impeachment trial resolution

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Biden Warms to Fast-Track Stimulus:** President Joe Biden and White House officials are siding with liberal Democrats stung by past efforts to reach compromise with Republicans and refusing to heed GOP appeals to scale back the administration's \$1.9 trillion stimulus.
 - Biden entered talks last week with a group of Republican senators who proposed a bill just one-third the size of his pandemic-relief package. They were the first lawmakers he invited to the White House as president, raising concern on the left he might seriously entertain their counter-proposal. But yesterday, following a lobbying effort by Democratic lawmakers and activists who sought to keep Biden committed to his own plan, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said the stimulus will probably advance under the reconciliation procedure that requires only simple majority support in the Senate.
 - House Democrats are proposing to limit the next round of relief payments to households earning less than \$200,000, after criticism that Biden's package would benefit the rich. Draft text offered by the House Ways and Means Committee calls for \$1,400 payments for single people earning \$75,000 or married couples earning \$150,000. The checks completely phase out for individuals making \$100,000 or joint taxpayers making \$200,000. The payments scale down more quickly than prior rounds, where top levels were determined by the scope of the payment and number of children in the household.
 - Democrats want to give K-12 schools almost \$130 billion and colleges almost \$40 billion for pandemic relief under a draft of their stimulus legislation. The text from the House Education and Labor Committee is the first version of a measure to be

incorporated into the \$1.9 trillion coronavirus stimulus. The panel will consider the measure today.

- **The Washington Post: Denis McDonough Confirmed As President Biden's Veterans Affairs Chief:** The Senate on Monday confirmed Denis McDonough as President Biden's Veterans Affairs secretary, choosing a non-veteran but a manager with years of government service to lead the sprawling health and benefits agency. McDonough, 51, was chief of staff during Barack Obama's second term and held senior roles on the National Security Council and on Capitol Hill before that. He told senators at his confirmation hearing that although he is not a veteran, his long career as a behind-the-scenes troubleshooter and policymaker would serve him well at the Department of Veterans Affairs, a massive bureaucracy beset by multiple challenges.
- **The Hill: Buttigieg: Officials Consider Negative COVID-19 Test Requirement On Domestic Flights:** Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said that officials are considering a requirement that passengers provide a negative COVID-19 test ahead of domestic flights, according to an interview published on Sunday. One of President Biden's first confirmed Cabinet members told "Axios on HBO" that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is engaged in "an active conversation" on whether to implement the requirement.
- **Bloomberg Government: Push to Reopen Schools Within 100 Days Looks Doubtful:** Biden pledged in early December to reopen most U.S. school buildings within his first 100 days as president. Soon after, however, he narrowed that goal to a majority of elementary and middle – rather than all K-12 – schools. And on Jan. 28, Anthony Fauci, Biden's chief medical adviser, warned that meeting even that lower target "may not happen." But even if Biden meets the goal, reopenings will remain bumpy thanks to fears of continuing Covid-19 transmission and clashes with teacher unions.
- **The Hill: House Dems' COVID-19 Relief Bill Includes 2-Year Boost To ObamaCare Subsidies:** House Democrats' coronavirus relief legislation released Monday would increase the Affordable Care Act's financial assistance for two years, providing greater help for enrollees' to afford their premiums. The measure, one provision in a sweeping COVID-19 relief package, would increase ObamaCare subsidies so that enrollees would have to pay no more than 8.5 percent of their income in health insurance premiums, down from a maximum cap of about 10 percent of income currently.
- **Bloomberg Government: Cutting Doses Risks More Variants:** Sticking to the two-dose regimen Pfizer and Moderna's vaccines may help shield against the creation of new strains by offering the fullest protection against the virus, Anthony Fauci said yesterday. Biden's chief medical adviser was responding to questions over whether the U.S. should focus its distribution efforts on getting out the first dose and put less emphasis on the second one.
- **360Dx: Biden Admin Finalizing Contracts To Boost At-Home COVID Tests:** Members of the White House COVID-19 Response Team announced on Friday that the Biden administration is finalizing contracts with six companies to quickly increase domestic testing capability for at-home SARS-CoV-2 tests. The deal would result in 61 million point-of-care or at-home tests available by the end of the summer, which Andy Slavitt, the senior adviser for the COVID-19 response team, said would "change things pretty significantly" for the country. The announcement follows the news earlier this week that the US Department of Defense awarded \$231.8 million to Ellume USA to produce the Ellume COVID-19 Home Test.

- **The New York Times: A Few Covid Vaccine Recipients Developed A Rare Blood Disorder:** One day after receiving her first dose of Moderna's Covid vaccine, Luz Legaspi, 72, woke up with bruises on her arms and legs, and blisters that bled inside her mouth. She was hospitalized in New York City that day, Jan. 19, with a severe case of immune thrombocytopenia – a lack of platelets, a blood component essential for clotting. The same condition led to the death in January of Dr. Gregory Michael, 56, an obstetrician in Miami Beach whose symptoms appeared three days after he received the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. Treatments failed to restore his platelets, and after two weeks in the hospital he died from a brain hemorrhage. It is not known whether this blood disorder is related to the Covid vaccines.