

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Wednesday, March 11, 2020

(The following information comes from Bloomberg Government Website)

Schedules: White House and Congress

WHITE HOUSE

- 12:15pm: President Trump meets with Sec. of State Mike Pompeo
- 3pm: Trump meets with bankers on coronavirus response
- 7pm: Trump, first lady Melania Trump have dinner at vice president's residence with VP Pence, second lady Karen Pence
- 11:15am: Pence delivers remarks to National League of Cities Board of Directors meetings
- 1pm: Pence meets with hospital executives on coronavirus response
- 4pm: Pence leads coronavirus task force meeting
- White House to host meeting with Alphabet Inc.'s Google, Amazon.com Inc., Facebook Inc. and other tech companies to coordinate responses to the growing coronavirus outbreak

CONGRESS

- House meets at 10am; set to consider S.J. Res. 68, which would order removal of U.S. forces from hostilities against Iran that haven't been authorized by Congress
 - House to also consider H.R. 6172, which would reauthorize the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act
- Senate meets at 10am; resumes consideration of S. 2657, vehicle for American Energy Innovation Act; Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin expected to file motion to discharge S.J. Res. 56, which would overturn the Education Department's 2019 student loan forgiveness rule

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **White House to Meet Companies on Virus:** The White House will host a meeting today with Google, Amazon, Facebook and other tech companies to coordinate responses to the coronavirus outbreak. The meeting will be hosted by U.S. Chief Technology Officer Michael Kratsios, according to a spokeswoman for the White House's Office of Science and Technology Policy. Representatives of Microsoft, Apple, Twitter as well as officials from various federal agencies will also attend the session, said the spokeswoman, Elena Hernandez.
- **'China Virus' Tweet Fuels Tensions With Beijing:** Trump and China's Xi Jinping have good reasons to deflect political blame for the coronavirus outbreak. And that has both of them zeroing in on the pathogen's name. As the disease formally designated as COVID-19

expands across the U.S., Trump and other top Republicans have sought to highlight the outbreak's foreign origin and even use it to justify curbs on immigration -- including a wall on the southern border with Mexico. Yesterday, Trump retweeted supporter Charlie Kirk calling it the "China virus" -- with the president agreeing "we need the Wall more than ever!"

- That's a characterization that Beijing has been fighting since the virus was first discovered in humans in the central Chinese city of Wuhan in December. Chinese diplomats and state media have pushed back against terms like the "Wuhan flu" wherever they turn up, with Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian arguing last week that "no conclusion has been reached yet on the origin of the virus."
 - "By calling it 'China virus' and thus suggesting its origin without any supporting facts or evidence, some media clearly want China to take the blame and their ulterior motives are laid bare," Zhao said.
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- **Wall Street Wish List:** Wall Street investors, still reeling from market turmoil created by the coronavirus, are proposing an array of measures to help ease the economic pain brought on by the outbreak. Trump said he wants a payroll tax holiday and that his administration is preparing "substantial" economic measures to offset the financial turbulence. That would follow the Federal Reserve's emergency step to cut interest rates by 50 basis points last week -- a move that failed to calm traders. The sudden shock of an oil price war that erupted between Saudi Arabia and Russia exacerbated the U.S. stock market's wild gyrations. Executives at major global asset management firms said central banks alone cannot stave off a recession.
 - **Iran Urges U.S. to Lift Sanctions:** Iran urged the U.S. to ease sanctions that have been preventing the Islamic Republic from importing medicines and foods needed in its efforts to fight a major outbreak of the coronavirus.
 - **House Reaches Deal to Renew Spy Bill:** House negotiators reached a bipartisan agreement to extend provisions of a law authorizing surveillance of suspected spies and terrorists, said Judiciary Chairman Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.) backed by the panel's new top Republican, Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Ohio). Lawmakers are trying to avoid a temporary lapse of the provisions this weekend or the need for a short-term extension. But the legislation faces opposition from lawmakers and outside groups concerned with civil liberties, as well as some Republicans and Democrats, which could undermine its chances of speedy passage.
 - One Senate Democrat strongly criticized the plan, and Nadler said an agreement hasn't been reached with Senate Republicans. Even if Senate GOP leaders agree, efforts to pass the bill quickly could be complicated if two Republican senators stick to their pledge to oppose the effort. The House plans to vote on the bill today.
 - **Broadband Mapping Bill Goes to President:** The Senate yesterday passed a bill aiming to improve broadband data maps, sending the measure to Trump for his signature. The House passed the bill on March 3. It would require the FCC to update its rules governing the information it collects from internet service providers on broadband deployment and availability. The rules would have to provide for data collection at least twice a year from

fixed and mobile broadband providers. They also would have to include processes to verify and challenge any data that's collected. The FCC would have to develop a process to collect verified data from other federal agencies; state, local, and tribal governments; and, if necessary, third parties.

- **Modernization Measures on Hiring, Technology Embraced by House:** The House approved proposals intended to improve its ability to operate in a more bipartisan and efficient fashion including measures addressing staff hiring and technology upgrades. The chamber adopted the resolution yesterday by a vote of 395-13. The measure, which applies only to House operations, doesn't need to be considered by the Senate.
- **Who's Next on Oversight for the GOP?** There's a four-way race among Republicans on the House Oversight and Reform Committee to be the new ranking member. The incumbent, Rep. Jordan, is vacating the position this week to become the new ranking member of Judiciary. The House GOP Steering Committee had picked Rep. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.) to succeed Jordan at Oversight. But that was before Trump picked Meadows to succeed Mick Mulvaney as White House chief of staff.
 - The candidates? Reps. Jody Hice (Ga.), Glenn Grothman (Wis.), James Comer (Ky.) and Kelly Armstrong (N.D.), according to a House Republican who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal party deliberations.
- **Report Recommends White House Cyber Chief:** The White House needs a national cyber director and Congress should create two permanent committees to develop a national strategy on cybersecurity, according to recommendations in a new report commissioned by lawmakers. The Cyberspace Solarium Commission issued a long-awaited report today detailing more than 75 recommendations for Congress to create a national blueprint for cyber deterrence against nation-state actors and individuals engaging in cyberattacks against the U.S., including a broad reorganization of the executive branch's cyber structure.
- **DOD Blamed for Chemical Use Linked to Cancer, Illness:** House appropriators today will hear first-hand accounts of how servicemembers are affected by the contamination attributed to firefighting foam used at Air Force bases during training exercises. Military service members and their families say they are disproportionately affected by such pollution. The primary source of PFAS at military installations is the firefighting foam developed by the Defense Department in the 1960s and first required by the Navy and the Marine Corps in 1967. Perfluorooctane sulfonate, or PFOS, is a component of "lightwater" foam, which can break down into many PFAS.
- **Grijalva Threatens to Subpoena BLM Headquarter Move Documents:** Rep. Raul Grijalva (D-Ariz.) yesterday told Bureau of Land Management acting director William Perry Pendley that the administration's refusal to produce documents about the BLM's headquarters move West may soon result in a subpoena. The Interior Department has produced reams of documents unrelated to the House Natural Resources Committee's requests for information

about the move, Grijalva told Pendley during a House Natural Resources subcommittee hearing. "I think the subpoena is not only appropriate, it's necessary because we're not getting any real answers," Grijalva said.

- **Biden Opens All-But-Insurmountable Lead:** Joe Biden has opened an all-but-insurmountable lead over Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) in the race for the Democratic presidential nomination, as the party's voters increasingly turn to him as the candidate they believe is best equipped to take on Trump in November.
 - The former vice president swept to convincing victories in Missouri, Mississippi, Idaho and, most importantly, Michigan. The state was the biggest prize of the night and is strategically important for both parties in the general election. In a speech to supporters in Philadelphia, Biden sought to heal divisions in the party and sounded like a candidate ready to claim the nomination.
 - "I want to thank Bernie Sanders and his supporters for their tireless energy and their passion," Biden said. "Together we'll defeat Donald Trump."
 - Sanders was aiming for a win in Washington state, which had the second biggest cache of delegates at stake yesterday. But by early this morning, he and Biden were neck and neck in the mail-in vote, and the race was too close to call. Results in North Dakota were incomplete.
- **Biden, Sanders to Debate Without Audience:** The Democratic National Committee announced there will be no live audience for the debate between Biden and Sanders scheduled for Sunday amid concerns about spreading the coronavirus. "At the request of both campaigns and out of an abundance of caution, there will be no live audience at the Arizona debate taking place on Sunday, March 15th," DNC Communications Director Xochitl Hinojosa said in a statement.
- **Trump to Campaign in Milwaukee:** The Trump campaign scheduled a "Catholics for Trump" event in Milwaukee at the Wisconsin Center convention center on March 19, according to a statement.
- **Sanders's Tax-The-Rich Plan Is 2800% Larger Than Biden's:** Biden wants to raise taxes on the wealthy. Sanders wants to send those levies off the charts. Biden's tax plan would raise individual income taxes by about \$109 billion over a decade, according to new estimates from the right-leaning Tax Foundation. In contrast, Sanders's plan would raise taxes on the richest Americans by nearly \$3.2 trillion in that same period, according to the data.
 - The figures show the sharp contrast in the scope of how the two leading contenders for the Democratic presidential nomination would seek to alter the tax bills of some of the wealthiest people in the U.S.. The primary contest has long been marked by plans to raise taxes on top earners, and the last two major candidates standing represent the two extreme ideological ends of what was once a wide field.
- **Trump Backs Tuberville Over Sessions:** Trump, in a Twitter post, said Tommy Tuberville will be a "great senator for the people of Alabama" and has "my total and

complete endorsement.” Tuberville is running for the Republican nomination against Trump’s former Attorney General Jeff Sessions. The pair are headed to a March 31 runoff. Tuberville, a 65-year-old former Auburn football coach, will face Sessions as he tries to reclaim the Alabama Senate seat that Republicans lost to Sen. Doug Jones (D-Ala.) in 2017.

- **Irish PM Sticks to Plan to Meet Trump in Washington:** Irish PM Leo Varadkar will meet Trump for the traditional Shamrock ceremony at the White House tomorrow, his office said.
- **Oil-Price War Threatens Energy Dominance:** Trump has made the achievement of “American energy dominance” a centerpiece of his re-election bid and a symbol of his pledge to restore U.S. industrial might. There’s just one problem: It may no longer be true.
 - The decision by Saudi Arabia and Russia to flood the world with crude oil just as the coronavirus epidemic cuts demand has energy companies idling drilling rigs in the U.S. and is raising the specter of bankruptcies in the oil patch.
 - The U.S. surge in production has been fueled by advances in horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing. Fracking, as it is known, has unlocked oil and gas locked in underground rock formations, but it is expensive, involving sand, chemicals and thousands of feet of pipe stretching horizontally out from each fracked well. Saudi Arabia’s bounty, by contrast, involves tapping conventional reserves, at far lower cost -- putting U.S. producers at a disadvantage when global prices fall.
 - America’s emergency oil reserves have been used in the past to provide relief from price spikes caused by wars or hurricanes. Now, they could be deployed to help oil drillers reeling from the worst market rout in nearly 30 years. Under a novel plan that’s been pitched by some industry lobbyists, the Trump administration would take advantage of the recent collapse in prices to snap up barrels on the cheap, according to three people familiar with the matter who asked for anonymity to detail private deliberations.
- **Afghanistan to Free 1,500 Taliban Inmates:** Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has ordered the release of 1,500 Taliban prisoners from government jails as a goodwill gesture to get direct peace negotiations with the militant group started. The prisoner release will start on Saturday and 100 prisoners will be set free each day based on their age and health as well as the length of their sentences, an emailed statement from Ghani’s press office said today.
 - The announcement follows the Feb. 29 peace deal signed between the U.S. and Taliban, which stated that the Americans would facilitate the release of as many as 5,000 Taliban prisoners before the direct talks between Ghani’s administration and Taliban to lay out the postwar future of the country. A Taliban spokesman, Suhail Shaheen, said earlier those talks would start only after the release of all prisoners in exchange for the freedom of 1,000 Afghan soldiers.
- **Pentagon Denies U.S. Is Softer on Russian Missiles:** The Pentagon disputed Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s observation that Washington has “softened” its stance against Ankara’s purchase of a Russian missile-defense system. Turkish media yesterday had cited Erdogan as telling reporters that the U.S. has “softened quite a bit,” and just wants

Ankara to “promise us you won’t activate the S-400s.” The Pentagon said that’s not the case. Turkey “is not going to receive a Patriot battery unless it returns the S-400,” Pentagon spokesman Jonathan Hoffman told reporters yesterday, referring to Ankara’s request to buy a U.S. missile defense system. U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper’s view has been clear on the topic all along, Hoffman added.