

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Thursday, March 11, 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: VP Harris holds virtual meeting to discuss stimulus with Americans she's met since taking office
- 3:15pm: Biden, Harris, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen attend weekly economic briefing in the Oval Office
- 5:15pm: Harris swears in Merrick Garland as attorney general
- 8:02pm: Biden addresses the nation, commemorates one-year anniversary of Covid-19 shutdown
- 12:30pm: White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki holds media briefing

CONGRESS

- U.S. House meets at 9am
 - House considers gun background check bills H.R. 8, H.R. 1446
- U.S. Senate convenes at 10:30am

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **The Washington Post: Congress Adopts \$1.9 Trillion Stimulus, Securing First Major Win For Biden:** Congress approved a sweeping \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package on Wednesday, authorizing a flurry of new federal spending and a temporary yet dramatic increase in anti-poverty programs to help millions of families still struggling amid the pandemic. The 220-to-211 vote in the House of Representatives almost entirely along party lines sends to President Biden's desk one of the largest economic rescue packages in U.S. history, which Democrats had promised to pass as one of their first acts of governance after securing narrow but potent majorities in Washington during the 2020 presidential election.
- **Bloomberg Government: Senate to Tee Up Becerra's Nomination:** The Senate will tee up the nomination of California Attorney General Xavier Becerra to lead Biden's Department of Health and Human Services today. His nomination has so far seen only Democratic support, making him likely to be Biden's first Cabinet choice to be confirmed along party-line votes. The nomination will need four hours of debate and a majority vote for the chamber to bring it up for a final vote.
 - The Senate today will hold a vote on the motion to invoke cloture, or limit debate, on the nomination of Deb Haaland to be secretary of the interior. A final confirmation vote on Haaland is expected next week due to opposition from some Republicans.
 - The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee plans to vote this morning on the nomination of David Turk to be deputy energy secretary.

- The Senate Foreign Relations Committee will consider the nominations of Wendy Sherman to be the deputy secretary of state and Brian McKeon to be deputy secretary of state for management and resources.
- **Modern Healthcare: Surprise Billing Ban Details Yet To Be Determined, Leaving Industry Fights To Come:** Providers and insurers will continue their fight over surprise billing as federal officials figure out how to put the No Surprises Act into practice, according to experts. The new law protects consumers from receiving unexpected medical bills resulting from out-of-network emergency care delivered by an out-of-network facility or out-of-network providers at an in-network facility. It also blocks out-of-network providers at in-network facilities from balance billing patients for non-emergency care unless they get patient consent. But patients will still be responsible for paying the in-network cost-sharing amount.
- **Roll Call: How The Pandemic Changed Health Care, One Year Later:** The World Health Organization officially declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic on March 11, 2020. More than 500,000 American deaths and trillions of taxpayer dollars later, the virus has reshaped the health care landscape for years to come. That system's shortcomings became painfully obvious as the virus spread, exposing glaring gaps in care for rural and low-income communities, as well as people of color. The lack of domestic manufacturing capacity for critical supplies like protective equipment forced nurses to reuse masks and dress in garbage bags. Patient care unrelated to COVID-19 suffered.
- **Bloomberg Government: Corporations Weigh Criteria for Political Donations:** Employees and shareholders are poised to have more influence over how dollars flow from business political action committees, as corporations and trade associations re-examine their approaches to political giving in the wake of the insurrection at the Capitol. In the days after Jan. 6, at least 27 business PACs announced policies that would take the election certification vote into account when making donations. At least 40 more halted all PAC contributions. When or if the pauses are lifted, freezing out the members of Congress who objected to certifying the election could be only the start, as stances on equality issues, climate change, and social justice policies are taken more into account.
- **The New York Times: Biden Administration Opens Nursing Home Doors:** The Biden administration on Wednesday published revised guidelines for nursing home visits during the pandemic, allowing guests the freedom to go inside to see residents regardless of whether the visitors or the residents have been vaccinated. The new recommendations, released by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services with input from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, are the first revision to the federal government's nursing home guidance since September. And they arrived as more than three million vaccine doses have been administered in nursing homes, the agency said.
- **Stat: Antibiotic Prescribing During Covid-19 Raises Concern About Drug Resistance:** Amid rising worries over antibiotic resistance, a new study suggests the drugs were overprescribed to patients during the first six months of the Covid-19 pandemic. In 96% of the cases, antibiotics were given to patients before a bacterial infection was confirmed. To wit, a first antibiotic was prescribed at the time of admission or within the first 48 hours of hospitalization. Yet such prescribing implies a degree of guesswork, since it can typically take 48 hours or more to confirm a bacterial infection, according to The Pew Charitable Trusts, which conducted the analysis.