

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Friday, March 12, 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

- 8:30am: President Biden meets virtually with leaders of Japan, Australia and India in first 'Quad' meeting
- Noon: VP Harris swears in Cecilia Rouse as Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers
- 2:30pm: Biden will deliver remarks on the American Rescue Plan in the Rose Garden
- 3:40pm: Biden, First Lady Jill Biden, depart White House for Wilmington, Delaware
- 4:35pm: Bidens arrive in Wilmington
- 11:15am: White House Covid-19 response team gives press briefing
- Noon: White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki, National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan gives press briefing

CONGRESS

- U.S. House meets at 10:30am
- U.S. Senate next meets March 15

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Democrats Offers \$300 Billion for Public Health Infrastructure:** House Democrats introduced a infrastructure package investing in climate, broadband and public health, as Democrats move into the next phase of their economic recovery effort following passage of the \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package. House Energy and Commerce Committee leaders released the package that would provide more than \$312 billion in funding for infrastructure projects under their jurisdiction, a priority of Biden's administration.
 - Health-related provisions include \$37 billion to be invested in public health infrastructure, providing \$7 billion to state and local health agencies, \$4.5 billion to clinical labs, and \$10 billion to community health centers. The funds aim to help modernize health departments and hospitals, as well as to renovate health-care facilities run by the Indian Health Services.
- **Bloomberg Government: ACA Directors Press Insurers to Promote New Subsidies:** Obamacare's exchange directors want insurers to spend a lot to get people enrolled in insurance plans now that the American Rescue Plan Act is signed into law. The \$1.9 trillion relief package includes premium subsidies for the first time for people earning over 400% of the federal poverty level. Those households won't have to pay more than 8.5% of their income on ACA policies.

- **Politico: Senate Advances Becerra Nomination For HHS Secretary:** A divided Senate on Thursday advanced Xavier Becerra's nomination to lead the Department of Health and Human Services after Maine Republican Susan Collins joined all of the chamber's Democrats in backing a confirmation vote. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer filed a discharge petition to bring up the nomination after the Senate Finance Committee split along party lines on the nomination last week, creating an extra procedural hurdle. The vote on holding a confirmation vote was 51-48.
- **Bloomberg Government: Yellen Says Americans to Start Seeing Payments This Weekend:** Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Americans would begin receiving \$1,400 relief payments in their bank accounts this weekend following enactment of the \$1.9 trillion pandemic-relief bill. "We're working hard first to get the direct payments out," Yellen said yesterday in an interview with NBC News. She also promised to rush aid for vaccination support.
- **AP: Justices Call Off Arguments Over Medicaid Work Requirements:** The Supreme Court said Thursday it has called off upcoming arguments over a Trump administration plan to remake Medicaid by requiring recipients to work, agreeing to a request from the Biden administration. The court had been scheduled to take up the issue on March 29. But the Biden administration already has decided preliminarily that work requirements do not fit with Medicaid's goal of providing health care to lower-income people.
- **Bloomberg Government: Tax Refunds Plunge 32%:** Just under a month into federal tax filing season, the IRS reported a 32% slide in the number of refunds sent out compared with last year, showcasing the delays that have spurred Democrats to call for postponing the traditional April 15 deadline. The drop-off in the number of refunds is partly a consequence of taxpayers filing 12.3 million fewer tax returns so far this year compared with 2020, according to data released yesterday.
- **The New York Times: Sickle Cell Treatment Not Linked To Cancer, Researchers Say:** Just a few weeks after a promising gene therapy for sickle cell disease seemed to have hit a roadblock, prospects for the treatment now look better. Preliminary data suggesting that it might cause cancer have not held up. In the gene therapy, scientists insert a normal gene into patients' DNA to help correct sickle cell disease, which is caused by a devastating mutation. The cutting-edge treatment may prove to be a cure, and a company that is testing the treatment, Bluebird Bio, had been on track to apply to the Food and Drug Administration for approval next year.