

# American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Thursday, March 18, 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

- 10:30am: VP Kamala Harris swears in Debra Haaland as Secretary of the Interior
- 11:15am: Harris meets with women labor leaders to discuss stimulus
- 1:15pm: Biden, Harris receive briefing from Covid-19 response team
- 2:15pm: Biden, Harris receive weekly economic briefing
- 3:15pm: Biden delivers remarks on state of vaccinations
- 6:15PM: Harris swears in Katherine Tai as U.S. Trade Representative
- 12:30pm: White House Press Sec. Jen Psaki holds press briefing

### CONGRESS

- U.S. House meets at noon
- U.S. Senate convenes at 10am
  - Full Senate to hold confirmation vote on Xavier Becerra's nomination to be HHS secretary

## Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Modern Healthcare: Nephrologists Frustrated Over CMS' Delay Of Kidney Program:** Providers caring for patients with chronic kidney disease are scrambling to update their operations after the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation delayed starting a new value-based payment program just weeks before it was set to go live. CMS was unable to respond to an interview request about how many nephrologists and other providers will be impacted by the delay in the Kidney Care Choices program. But the program received more applications than expected, according to Mark Gooding, an associate principal at the Avalere consultancy.
- **Modern Healthcare: CMS Ends Policy Allowing Some Part D Plans To Cover Fewer Drugs:** The Biden administration on Tuesday ended a Trump-era policy that would have allowed Medicare Part D plans to cover fewer drugs under a new pay model. When CMS' Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation requested Part D Payment Modernization applications for 2022 in January, it said that plans participating in the model wouldn't have to cover all drugs in five of the six protected drug classes: anticonvulsants, immunosuppressants, antidepressants, antipsychotics and antineoplastics. It also allowed Part D plans to only include one drug per class in their formulary instead of two drugs, as currently required, and paused the 10% downside risk requirement for model participants during the 2022 plan year.

- **Bloomberg Government: House GOP Allows Earmark Money:** House Republicans yesterday voted to allow members to request dedicated-spending projects, also known as “earmarks,” following the same move by Democrats, in a positive sign for Biden’s hopes for a bipartisan infrastructure bill that may carry health-care modernization provisions. Republicans in the Senate will still have to decide whether to revive the earmarking process.
- **Bloomberg Government: Becerra’s Confirmation Vote:** The Senate at noon today plans to vote on the nomination of Biden’s nominee to be secretary of Health and Human Services. Senators voted 50-49 yesterday to limit debate on the nomination of California Attorney General Xavier Becerra to the post. A vote last week to move Becerra’s nomination forward cleared on just a 51-48 vote, signaling that he could get the least amount of GOP support of any of Biden’s cabinet choices.
  - Becerra’s confirmation vote comes after two other nominees for key public health leadership posts at the HHS were approved yesterday by the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. The nominations of Vivek Murthy and Rachel Levine to serve as U.S. surgeon general and assistant secretary for health, respectively, now head to the full chamber for a vote.
- **Bloomberg: Biden Considers Expanding Obamacare Enrollment Window Past May:** The Biden administration is considering extending the special enrollment window for Americans to purchase Affordable Care Act health plans beyond its current expiration date of May 15, according to an administration official familiar with the situation. President Joe Biden ordered a new enrollment period from Feb. 15 to May 15, giving Americans a chance to purchase Obamacare health plans outside the usual year-end window. Meanwhile, the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan enacted last week includes subsidies to offset costs for buying the plans.
- **Bloomberg Government: Biden to Reach 100 Million Vaccinations Goal Early:** Biden is poised to meet his goal of delivering 100 million Covid-19 vaccine shots in his first 100 days in office as soon as today, reaching the milestone more than a month ahead of time. As of yesterday, his 57th day in office, the U.S. had vaccinated nearly 98 million people since Biden’s inauguration. The pace of shots has risen to an average of nearly 2.5 million per day for the last week. That leaves Biden within grasp of his target today -- the 58th day of his presidency -- and poised to hit it no later than tomorrow, barring a major slowdown. He’s scheduled to speak publicly this afternoon about the state of vaccinations.
- **NBC News: Biden Admin To Provide \$10B For Covid Testing To Speed School Reopenings:** The Biden administration is directing \$10 billion from the recently passed stimulus package toward increased Covid-19 testing in schools, as the White House grapples with the difficult task of getting the nation's school children back into classrooms. The funding will go out in April and be awarded directly to states, the administration said Wednesday. Because the funding will be allocated proportionally, large states such as California and Texas will receive more than \$800 million each, the administration said.