

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Tuesday, March 30, 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

- 2pm: Biden will be joined in the Oval Office by Vice President Kamala Harris when he signs the PPP Extension Act into law, granting small businesses two more months of loans
- 12:30pm: White House press secretary Jen Psaki gives press briefing

CONGRESS

- Senate is adjourned until April 12, plans April 1 pro forma session
- The next House meeting is scheduled for April 1

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **NPR: Racial Equity In Vaccination? Dialysis Centers Can Help With That:** Frankie Shaw was diabetic by age 22, had a stroke at 35, and for the last five years has been on dialysis, a grueling treatment regime that requires either multiple visits to a clinic each week or hours a day, multiple days a week on a home machine. Over the past year, fear of COVID-19 dogged Shaw, who's now 44 and a retail store manager. Friends died; her twin brother was recently hospitalized with it and still has difficulty breathing. That terrified Shaw, who also has hypertension. "Just imagine if I had COVID, or if I didn't have anything to help boost my immune system to help fight it off?" Shaw's situation is pretty typical of the 550,000 people in the U.S. on dialysis.
- **Stat: The Drug Pricing Policies Dems May Use To Fund Biden's Next Big Bill:** Democrats in Congress are already gearing up for their next big legislative push, and drug pricing reforms will be a tempting piggy bank to pay for their extensive wish list. It's still too early to tell precisely how much money Democrats will need to offset the costs of the economic recovery plan President Biden is hoping to advance. But lobbyists are expecting lawmakers to ask drug makers to pony up significant taxpayer savings to help pay for policy on infrastructure and the social safety net.
- **Bloomberg Government: Democrats Raise Alarm Over Trump Drug Pricing Tool:** A group of Democrats in Congress, led by House Ways and Means Health Subcommittee Chair Lloyd Doggett (D-Texas), submitted a public comment opposing a Trump-era proposed rule they say would revoke the government's ability under the Bayh-Dole Act to protect taxpayer investments and reasonable prices for prescription drugs and other patented inventions that were partially funded by U.S. taxpayer dollars, according to a statement.
- **Stat: Congressional Lawmakers Urge FTC To Investigate Insulin Makers Over Their Pricing:** In the latest flare up over the cost of insulin, several Congressional lawmakers want the Federal Trade Commission to investigate the three big manufacturers of the

diabetes treatment for “exploiting” their market power and repeatedly raising prices. The lawmakers, who are all Democrats, cited instances in which the companies – Eli Lilly (LLY), Novo Nordisk (NVO), and Sanofi (SNY) – raised prices nearly simultaneously. As an example, two of the insulin makers increased prices by 16% within a day of each other. In fact, there were at least 13 such cases involving Sanofi and Novo Nordisk between 2009 and 2019, and Lilly often followed suit, they claimed.

- **Bloomberg Government: Democrats Push Capital Gains Tax Hike:** Senate Democrats are circulating a plan that would trigger tax bills on the assets of the wealthy after they die as the lawmakers seek new sources of revenue to fund trillions of dollars in infrastructure spending and social programs. Their bill would seek to end a long-standing feature of the tax code that permits many assets, including property, stocks, bonds and businesses to be passed to heirs without immediately generating tax bills.
- **Bloomberg Government: Biden Announces Intent to Nominate 11 Judicial Candidates:** Biden announced a slate of 11 federal judge nominees today that placed a heavy emphasis on his stated goal of promoting diversity. The picks -- Biden’s first to the federal bench since taking office Jan. 20 -- included Zahid Quraishi, who would be the first Muslim-American federal judge in U.S. history, and Ketanji Brown Jackson, one of three Black women selected to fill appeals court vacancies.
 - Biden starts off behind his predecessors in terms of total current vacancies he has available to fill, according to a recent Brookings Institution report. Of the past six presidents, only Ronald Reagan in 1981 had fewer already vacant seats by this time in his presidency.
- **The Washington Post: Biden, Health Officials Sound Alarm As Signs Of Covid Surge Proliferate:** President Biden and top health officials on Monday urged an impatient public to remain vigilant against the coronavirus, as daily case counts continued to rise, younger people replaced seniors in some U.S. hospitals, and the United States moved beyond the milestone of 30 million cases since the outbreak began. Even as the nation’s immunization program continued to pick up speed and new research showed coronavirus vaccines are highly effective in real-world conditions, Biden said states should suspend reopening plans and governors who had rescinded mask mandates should reinstate them.
- **The New York Times: World Leaders Call For An International Treaty To Combat Future Pandemics:** Citing what they call “the biggest challenge to the global community since the 1940s,” the leaders of 25 countries, the European Union and the World Health Organization on Tuesday floated an international treaty to protect the world from pandemics. In a joint article published in numerous newspapers across the globe, the leaders warn that the current coronavirus pandemic will inevitably be followed by others at some point. They outline a treaty meant to provide universal and equitable access to vaccines, medicines and diagnostics, a suggestion first made in November by Charles Michel, the president of the European Council, the body that represents the leaders of the European Union countries.