

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Tuesday, March 9, 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

- 11:45am: President Biden visits a small business that has benefited from a Paycheck Protection Program loan
- 1:30p: White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki, deputy director of National Economic Council Bharat Ramamurti hold briefing

CONGRESS

- U.S. House meets at 10am
 - House may take up Biden's stimulus package Tuesday, though final vote could slip to Wednesday
- U.S. Senate convenes at 3pm

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Relief Bill's Aid to Minority Farmers Shows Democrats' Priorities:** The nation's shrinking pool of minority farmers is due to receive \$5 billion of assistance in the Covid-19 relief bill, reflecting the Democrats' focus on the lingering impact of racism and their battle to take control of the Senate.
 - At a time when much of Washington is fixated on the influence of moderate Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), the new debt relief program targeted specifically to Black, Hispanic, and Native American farmers also shows the political weight of Sen. Raphael Warnock (D-Ga.). The Black freshman senator's runoff win in Georgia, along with that of fellow Democrat Jon Ossoff, tipped the Senate to Democratic control. "For too long, farmers of color have been left to fend for themselves, not getting the support they deserve from the USDA, making it even more difficult for them to recover from this pandemic," Warnock, who was a driving force behind the provision, said on the Senate floor, referring to the Department of Agriculture.
- **The Hill: House Vote On COVID-19 Relief Expected By Wednesday:** An expected House vote on Tuesday to send the \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief package to President Biden's desk may not end up happening until Wednesday. Democratic aides said Monday that the House is still awaiting bill processing papers from the Senate for the massive proposal. Depending on when the House receives those papers, the final vote could still occur on Tuesday or possibly Wednesday.
- **Bloomberg Government: Pentagon Prepares Next Budget:** Pentagon officials are crafting a fiscal 2022 budget plan that assumes the military will receive \$704 billion to \$708 billion, essentially a flat budget instead of the increase anticipated under former President Donald Trump, according to three current or former defense officials. The previous administration

had announced that it would propose about \$722 billion for the Defense Department in the year that begins Oct. 1, although lawmakers of both parties have predicted less would be available amid competing spending demands and rising deficits from Covid-19 relief packages.

- **Bloomberg Government: Biden Plans Speech to Mark a Year Since Shutdowns:** Biden will deliver his first prime-time address on Thursday as he marks the anniversary of Covid-19 lockdowns with a speech to the nation, the White House said. "He'll discuss the many sacrifices of the American people have made over the last year and the grave loss communities and families across the country have suffered," White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said yesterday.
- **KHN: Pandemic Aid Package Includes Relief From High Premiums:** As President Joe Biden's pandemic relief package steams through Congress, Democrats have hitched a ride for a top health care priority: strengthening the Affordable Care Act with some of the most significant changes to insurance affordability in more than a decade. The bill would spend \$34 billion to help Americans who buy insurance on the marketplaces created by the ACA through 2022, when the benefits would expire. The Senate sent its relief package, one of the largest in congressional history, back to the House where it could come up as early as Tuesday. It is expected to pass and then go to Biden for his signature.
- **NBC News: CDC Releases New Covid Guidelines For Fully Vaccinated People:** The new guidelines do not, however, suggest that fully vaccinated people can go back to life as it was in 2019. In public or around others who are vulnerable to Covid-19 complications, mitigation measures should remain in line with the status quo, the CDC said. Keep up with hand-washing. Wear masks in public places, and continue to adhere to physical distancing guidelines. Avoid crowded areas. Seek out Covid-19 testing if symptoms develop.
- **Stateline: Biden Aims To Build On Obamacare's Cost-Cutting Measures:** In the decade-plus since it became law, the Affordable Care Act has helped slow the explosive growth in health spending. But the United States still spends about twice as much per capita as other wealthy nations. That leaves President Joe Biden with an enormous health care challenge, beyond leading the country out of the pandemic: curbing health care cost increases that, economists warn, are unsustainable. The political obstacles will be enormous. Biden faces a Republican Party that has spent the past decade trying to destroy the ACA. There also is a remote possibility that the U.S. Supreme Court will scrap Obamacare when it rules on a challenge to the law mounted by GOP state attorneys general, many legal experts say. And Biden will have to overcome the resistance of powerful medical and pharmaceutical interests that oppose price constraints.