

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Thursday, April 1, 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

- 9:15am: Vice President Kamala Harris to meet virtually with stakeholders to discuss Covid-19 public education efforts
- 12:15pm: Biden, Harris have lunch
- 1:15pm: Biden convenes his first cabinet meeting
- Harris travels to California ahead of the Easter holiday
- Noon: White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki holds press briefing

CONGRESS

- 2pm: House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to hold virtual press conference
- House and Senate to hold pro forma sessions

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: HHS Doubles ACA Ad Spending After Boost:** The Biden administration will spend \$50 million to promote new Obamacare subsidies made available through the latest pandemic relief law, doubling the amount it's put toward encouraging people to sign up for health-care coverage. The new subsidies, which are available for the first time to those with incomes above 400% of the federal poverty level, means an average of four out of five customers will be able to buy a plan for \$10 or less per month, the HHS said in a statement announcing the new ad campaign, which will begin today.
- **Modern Healthcare: Biden Pushes For Home Health Medicaid Coverage, \$400 Billion In Funding:** The Biden administration is calling on Congress to expand access to home and community-based care services covered by Medicaid as part of a multi-billion dollar investment in the "care economy." The proposal, part of a larger jobs and infrastructure plan unveiled by the White House Wednesday, asks Congress to put \$400 billion toward expanding access to home and community-based care for the elderly and people with disabilities. If acted on by Congress, it would represent one of the largest financial investments made in HCBS in a decade at a time when nursing home residents have disproportionately gotten sick and died of COVID-19.
- **Modern Healthcare: CMS Delays Processing April Medicare Claims:** CMS on Wednesday told Medicare administrative contractors not to process claims for care given on or after April 1, delaying some payments to providers. Although a congressional bill to end a 2% cut to all Medicare payments for the rest of the year is expected to pass the House later in April, the change is slated to go into effect on Thursday. The Senate approved the bill last week. If Congress ends the freeze on Medicare payment cuts,

Medicare administrative contractors will reprocess paid claims automatically at the reduced rate.

- **Bloomberg Government: HHS Asked to Shield Drug Discounts Despite Patient Shift:** America's hospitals are calling on the Biden White House to continue letting health-care providers access discounted drugs in spite of coronavirus-stirred changes to the number of patients they treat with low-income health coverage. The pandemic pushed U.S. hospitals to halt "non-urgent services" and shift resources to treat those suffering from Covid-19, reducing the amount of poor patients, the American Hospital Association told HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra.
- **Bloomberg Government: Biden Targets Aid for Workers:** Biden is aiming to boost popular support for his infrastructure plan by including proposals to help workers and protect unions. Biden's plan calls for \$100 billion for workforce training programs, including services for dislocated workers – the first proposal that spends serious money on such programs since the pandemic-linked economic downturn. The White House is also seeking to double the number of registered apprenticeships.
 - The plan would also require businesses benefiting from an infusion of infrastructure funds to pay prevailing wages and stay neutral in union organizing efforts. And it called on lawmakers to incorporate a bill that would strengthen workers' ability to form unions and win contracts. "I support unions," Biden said in Pittsburgh. "They built the middle class and it's about time they got a piece of the action."
- **Bloomberg Government: Zoom Lobbying May Outlast Covid:** With signs the pandemic may be ebbing, advocacy groups are reassessing how to handle traditional fly-in events when members descend on Capitol Hill to buttonhole members. The groups say the pandemic has forced them to innovate and reevaluate the best way to get their message across to congressional offices. Officials with a half-dozen trade associations said most are already planning to have their legislative advocacy fly-ins be in-person for next year. However, the move by organizations over the last year to video platforms for their lobbying has opened up possibilities for them to expand their influence activities.
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