

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Wednesday, April 28, 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

- 9:00 PM: President Biden addresses a joint session of Congress.

CONGRESS:

- The Senate is set to take up a measure today that would reinstate an Obama-era rule limiting harmful methane emissions from oil and gas drilling.
- The Senate Judiciary Committee's initial hearing for Biden's first judicial nominations, including D.C. Circuit nominee Ketanji Brown Jackson, will take place today.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Medicare Age Eligibility:** Biden's new American Families Plan calls for the lowering of the age to 60 for people to voluntarily enroll in Medicare, according to a White House fact sheet. Congressional Democrats have supported such a move, and want to help fund the benefits expansion with \$456 billion that Medicare could save over 10 years through Biden's plan to let the program negotiate its own drug prices.
 - After the massive loss of jobs and employer-based health coverage due to Covid-19, Democrats say public support for their plan is strong. A recent Gallup poll found roughly 46 million Americans couldn't pay for quality health care if they needed it. And even before the pandemic struck, 77% of Americans, including 69% of Republicans, favored letting adults ages 50 to 64 buy into the Medicare program, according to a January 2019 poll by the Kaiser Family Foundation.
 - Getting their policy goals accomplished, however, will still prove to be a heavy political lift. Congressional Republicans have railed against expanding federal health-care programs and have shown no signs of budging.
- **Bloomberg Government: Republicans Use Medical Backgrounds to Tout Vaccine:** A group of Republican lawmakers with backgrounds as medical professionals launched a public service campaign yesterday to encourage people to get Covid-19 vaccines as polls show a substantial chunk of Republicans are resisting getting the shot. Sen. John Barrasso, a physician, said hesitancy in his home state of Wyoming is one of the reasons he wanted to take part in the campaign, which was initiated by Sen. Roger Marshall (Kan.), a medical doctor.
- **Bloomberg Government: Hearing on Long Covid Today:** The head of the nation's medical research agency will testify before the House Energy and Commerce Committee today about Long Covid, a condition when the coronavirus makes people sick for weeks or months. Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health, and John Brooks,

chief medical officer for the CDC's pandemic response, will tell lawmakers that as many as 30% of people who recover from Covid-19 will suffer some lingering effects, ranging from abnormal sleep patterns to a shortness of breath, according to their prepared remarks.

- **Bloomberg Government: Momentum Builds for Mental Health Bill:** A bipartisan group of lawmakers will introduce legislation today to help schools and communities flag when someone needs mental health support. Lawmakers including Drew Ferguson (R-Ga.), Michael Burgess (R-Texas) and Scott Peters (D-Calif.) will introduce the bill to direct various federal agencies to create best practices for behavioral intervention programs to help communities identify the earliest signs of violence to self or others.
- **Bloomberg Government: New Exemptions for Prescribing Opioid Treatment:** The Department of Health and Human Services released new exemptions aimed at widening access to a take-at-home treatment for opioid use disorder. The new guidelines say licensed health practitioners who possess a valid registration from the Drug Enforcement Administration can prescribe buprenorphine without certification in training, counseling, and other ancillary services.
- **Bloomberg Government: Medicare Moves to Increase Hospital Payments by \$2.5B:** Acute-care hospitals would see an overall 2.8% increase, or another \$2.5 billion, in Medicare reimbursements in fiscal year 2022 under a proposed rule released yesterday by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Long-term care hospitals would receive an extra 1.4%, or \$52 million under the proposal (RIN 0938-AU44), which is scheduled to be published May 12 in the Federal Register.
- **CNBC: Pfizer's new at-home pill to treat Covid could be available by end of the year, CEO hopes:** Pfizer's experimental oral drug to treat Covid-19 at the first sign of illness could be available by the end of the year, CEO Albert Bourla told CNBC on Tuesday. The company, which developed the first authorized Covid-19 vaccine in the U.S. with German drugmaker BioNTech, began in March an early stage clinical trial testing a new antiviral therapy for the disease. The drug is part of a class of medicines called protease inhibitors and works by inhibiting an enzyme that the virus needs to replicate in human cells. Protease inhibitors are used to treat other viral pathogens such as HIV and hepatitis C. If clinical trials go well and the Food and Drug Administration approves it, the drug could be distributed across the U.S. by the end of the year, Bourla told CNBC's "Squawk Box."
- **Stat: A Shortage of Tiny Pipette Tips Is Creating Huge Problems for Science:** The humble pipette tip is tiny, cheap, and utterly essential to science. It powers research into new medicines, Covid-19 diagnostics, and every blood test ever run. It is also, ordinarily, abundant — a typical bench scientist might grab dozens every day. But now, a series of ill-timed breaks along the pipette tip supply chain — spurred by blackouts, fires, and pandemic-related demand — have created a global shortage that is threatening nearly every corner of the scientific world.