

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Tuesday, May 11, 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

- 1:00 pm: President Biden will meet virtually with the following governors: Charlie Baker (R-MA), Spencer Cox (R-UT), Mike DeWine (R-OH), Michelle Lujan Grisham (D-NM), Janet Mills (D-ME), and Tim Walz (D-MN) to discuss “innovative ways governors are working to get the people in their states vaccinated,” White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said.

CONGRESS:

- The House returns today, and plans to consider 14 measures under expedited procedure.
- The Senate plans to vote today on Biden’s pick to be the second in command at HHS, Andrea Palm.
 - Palm previously headed Wisconsin’s Health Services Department, overseeing its \$12 billion budget and over 6,000 employees, and served as the HHS’s chief of staff and as senior counselor to the secretary during the Obama administration.
- The Senate Rules and Administration Committee will consider the chamber’s version of a Democratic-backed elections and ethics bill.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg: HHS No. 2 Pick Moves Closer to Confirmation:** Biden’s pick to be the second in command at HHS, Andrea Palm, inched one step closer yesterday to confirmation after the Senate voted 62-35 to limit debate on her nomination to serve as HHS deputy secretary. A final vote is expected today. Palm previously headed Wisconsin’s Health Services Department, overseeing its \$12 billion budget and over 6,000 employees, and served as the HHS’s chief of staff and as senior counselor to the secretary during the Obama administration.
- **Bloomberg: CMS Nomination:** The Senate may consider a motion to discharge the nomination of Chiquita Brooks-LaSure to head the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services today, according to a schedule from Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin’s (D-Ill) office. The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee split 14-14 in a vote last month to advance Brooks-LaSure. Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas) has put a hold on Brooks-LaSure’s nomination over the Biden administration’s decision to disapprove a 10-year extension for his state’s Medicaid waiver.
- **Bloomberg: Medicare Negotiation Effort Spurs Look at VA Model:** Lawmakers pushing for Medicare to negotiate its own drug prices can draw inspiration from the Veterans Health Administration’s method of extracting deep discounts from the pharmaceutical

sector. A GAO report this year found the Veterans Health Administration, part of the Veterans Affairs Department, paid 54% less than Medicare for 399 brand-name and generic drugs in 2017. But analysts say applying that model would require fundamental changes to Medicare.

- **Bloomberg: Pfizer Shot Gets U.S. Clearance for Young Teens:** Pfizer and BioNTech's coronavirus vaccine was cleared for use in minors age 12 to 15 in the U.S., paving the way for the mass vaccination of middle- and high-school students before summer camps and the next school year. The FDA said in a statement yesterday it expanded the shot's original emergency use authorization to include adolescents. The vaccine generated a strong immune response, there were no cases of Covid in the vaccinated group, and there were no signs of any new or worrisome side effects, Peter Marks, director of the FDA's Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research, said at a news conference.
 - A group of advisers to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will meet tomorrow to make recommendations for administration of the shots. Kids could begin receiving them as soon as Thursday, Marks said. While adolescent cases tend to be milder, kids can still spread the disease and child cases are responsible for a rising share of the nation's total, as more adults get vaccinated.
- **Stat: CDC'S Slow, Cautious Messaging On Covid-19 Seems Out Of Step With The Moment, Public Health Experts Say:** Nearly a year ago, amid concerns about how to prevent transmission of the virus causing Covid-19, scientists were beginning to conclude that rigorous disinfection of surfaces — say, fogging them or deep-cleaning with bleach — was overkill. Academics were warning that the risk of so-called fomite transmission was wildly overblown. In the fall, research from Israel and Italy found that the virus couldn't even be cultured from surfaces in hospital infectious disease units. By February of this year, the editorial board of Nature was openly urging the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to update its guidelines. The CDC did so — last month.
- **Modern Healthcare: House Introduces COVID Liability Bill For Healthcare Providers:** A bipartisan group of members of the U.S. House of Representatives has re-introduced a piece of legislation that aims to protect healthcare workers from lawsuits related to the pandemic. Under the Coronavirus Provider Protection Act, healthcare professionals would not be liable for harm caused by care or withholding services due to the pandemic. This includes providers practicing outside of their normal area or with a lack of resources "attributable to the pandemic." "If communities shut down physicians offices or reschedule elective surgeries, that causes adverse health outcomes in patients beyond a physician's control," said Dr. Susan Bailey, president of the American Medical Association.
- **The Wall Street Journal: New Reported U.S. Cases Under 40,000 For Third Day:** Newly reported coronavirus cases in the U.S. stayed under 40,000 for the third consecutive day, as Covid-19 vaccinations appeared set to be expanded to younger people. The U.S. reported more than 35,000 new cases for Monday, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University that was published early Tuesday. Monday's figure was lower than the week-earlier tally of 50,560 but was up from Sunday's total of 21,392, though about a third of states don't report new cases or deaths on the weekends.