

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Wednesday, May 12, 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

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WHITE HOUSE

- President Joe Biden plans to meet this morning with House and Senate leadership to discuss areas of potential agreement as the president pushes his \$4 trillion economic plan. Biden will meet in the Oval Office at 11 a.m. with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (Ky.), Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (Calif.).

CONGRESS:

- The House will vote on a large list of broadly bipartisan measures today, while the Senate begins work on the nomination of Chiquita Brooks-LaSure to be administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: HHS Budget:** The House Energy and Commerce Committee will meet with Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra to discuss the department's fiscal year 2022 budget request.
- **Bloomberg Government: Rescission of Trump Insulin Rule Moves Ahead:** The HHS is proposing to rescind a Trump administration drug rule that required community health centers to pass on their insulin and epinephrine discount savings to patients. The proposal to pull that rule is under review at the Office of Management and Budget. The Health and Human Services Department can publish it after it's cleared.
- **Modern Healthcare: CMS Requires Nursing Homes To Offer COVID-19 Vaccines, Education:** Long-term and intermediate care facilities will have to educate their residents, clients and staff about COVID-19 vaccines and offer such vaccines to those populations when available, according to a CMS interim final rule published Tuesday. If those facilities don't provide the required education and vaccinations, the agency could bar them from participating in Medicare or Medicaid. The rule also requires long-term and intermediate care facilities to report the COVID-19 vaccination status of their residents and staff to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- **Bloomberg Government: Tensions Still High on House Floor:** A bill on drug market exclusivity that previously had wide bipartisan support was rejected by the House last night, the latest sign of how divided lawmakers remain over the Jan. 6 vote to certify the electoral college. The legislation would prevent drug makers from obtaining market exclusivity for certain drugs used to treat rare diseases. In 2019, the bill was sponsored by

Rep. Madeleine Dean (D-Penn.) with Rep. Buddy Carter (R-Ga.) as a co-lead. It was passed easily by voice vote.

- But this year, Dean refused to let Carter be a co-lead after Carter was one of 138 House Republicans to object to Pennsylvania's electoral college votes. As a result, 168 Republicans voted against the bill. The final vote of 250-168 was insufficient for passage because the bill was moving under suspension of the rules – something reserved for bills that the vast majority of members support – which requires two-thirds of members to support for passage.
- House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) said in a statement the bill will return to the floor next week via a process that will only require a simple majority for passage.
- **Stat: AMA Pledges In New Plan To Dismantle Causes Of Health Inequities:** Saying it needs to “pivot from ambivalence to urgent action” and hold itself accountable for deeply embedded health inequities, the American Medical Association has vowed in a new strategic plan to use its influence as one of the world's most powerful medical organizations to fight and dismantle white supremacy and racism in the U.S. health care system – and within its own walls. The 83-page report on racial justice and health equity, which is the culmination of two years of work and was scheduled to be released on Wednesday, was obtained by STAT and has now been released by the AMA.
- **Bloomberg Government: Lawmakers Press HHS on Medicare Advantage:** An advocacy group is praising a bipartisan letter to Beccera to strengthen Medicare Advantage, which provides Medicare benefits to seniors and Americans with disabilities through private health-care insurers. Reps. Val Demings (D-Fla.), Mike Gallagher (R-Wis.), and 68 other lawmakers of districts where more than 50% of seniors are enrolled in Medicare Advantage signed onto the letter, which was shared with Bloomberg Government by the advocacy group Better Medicare Alliance.
- **Bloomberg Government: Sinema Rivals Manchin as Democrats' Wild Card:** Sen. Kyrsten Sinema (D-Ariz.) holds the power to quash any element of Biden's agenda by withholding her vote in a 50-50 Senate. But where she stands on issues is something of a mystery. The other Senate Democrat most likely to split with his party, Joe Manchin (W-Va.), appears frequently on Sunday talk shows to discuss policy and navigates the Capitol's corridors with reporters in tow. By contrast, Sinema is tight-lipped and seldom seen except on the Senate floor or inside committee rooms. Now the question is just how much of an impediment Sinema will be to Democrats' agenda.
- **CNN: Americans As Young As 12 Begin To Get Vaccinated Against Covid-19 After FDA's Authorization:** Some vaccine sites began to inoculate 12-to-15-year-olds against Covid-19 on Tuesday morning, a day after the US Food and Drug Administration authorized Pfizer's vaccine for the age group. Jacob Laney, 14, was in line at a Decatur, Georgia, vaccine site early Tuesday in hopes of getting the vaccine. "My friend got Covid and it looked really bad, and I just did not want to get it," he told CNN. Once he gets both doses of Pfizer's two-dose vaccine, "I think I'll be less scared of getting it and less scared of having issues with Covid-19," he said.
- **Bloomberg Government: IRS Needs More Than Audits to Find Tax Cheats:** The Internal Revenue Service needs additional tools beyond audits to find individuals and businesses that are underpaying their federal tax bills, a former commissioner of the agency told a congressional panel yesterday. “Simply scaling up what the IRS does today will not

produce the desired results," Charles Rossotti said at a Senate Finance subcommittee hearing. "As important as audits are, currently, all of IRS audit activity only recovers about 2.5% of the tax gap."

- **Bloomberg Government: China Bill Offers Bipartisan Opportunity:** An effort in the Senate to ramp up federal support for U.S. research and development in the aim of better competing with China heads toward a committee vote today, posing a chance for lawmakers' to bridge sharp partisan differences across most of the congressional agenda. The Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee is scheduled to vote on whether to advance the package, framed around a \$100 billion, five-year injection to American colleges and universities, to the Senate floor.