

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Wednesday, May 19, 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

- President Biden travels to New London, CT for the Coast Guard Academy's 140th Commencement Exercises. He will deliver the keynote address.

CONGRESS:

- The House is scheduled to vote today on a bill to establish an independent, bipartisan commission to investigate the events surrounding the Jan. 6 assault on the Capitol, in spite of opposition from Republican leadership.
- Senators will vote on repealing a Trump administration rule governing how employers can resolve workplace bias claims.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: HHS Must Redo Medicare Pay for Physician Training:** Hundreds of hospitals throughout the nation will get a boost in their Medicare reimbursements for training medical residents as the government unlawfully changed how those payments are calculated, a federal court said. The HHS secretary acted arbitrarily and capriciously when he adopted a regulation that effectively changed the weighting factors statutorily assigned to residents, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia said.
- **Bloomberg Government: CDC Budget:** The Senate Appropriations Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee holds a hearing on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's fiscal 2022 budget. Director Rochelle Walensky will testify.
- **Bloomberg Government: Emergent & Health:** The House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis scheduled a hybrid hearing to examine Emergent BioSolutions, public health and public funds.
- **CNN: US Coronavirus: Average Cases Are Lowest They've Been In Nearly A Year. Vaccines Can Push Them Even Lower, Officials Say:** Covid-19 vaccines have proven a tremendous ally in America's battle against the virus. "For the first time since the pandemic began, Covid cases are down in all 50 states," White House senior Covid-19 adviser Andy Slavitt said in a Tuesday briefing. "We are winning the war on the virus, and we need you to help us finish the job." His comments come as state leaders and public health officials express optimism about the country's Covid-19 trends and where we could be by summertime.
- **Bloomberg Government: House Orphan Drug Designations Bill on Tap:** House lawmakers plan to vote on a measure (H.R. 1629) under terms set by the Rules Committee

that would stop drug corporations from getting market exclusivity for certain medications used to treat rare diseases if they are profitable. Such “orphan drugs” can qualify for seven years of exclusivity if they treat medical conditions affecting under 200,000 people in the U.S., or if there is no reasonable expectation production costs could be recouped via sales.

- **The Wall Street Journal: House Committee Takes On Pricing, Patents For Top-Selling Drug Humira:** Democratic members of the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Reform have been investigating how AbbVie sets the prices of some of its products, including its top-selling immunology drug, Humira. At the hearing, committee members questioned AbbVie Chief Executive Richard Gonzalez about price increases for Humira as well as AbbVie’s patents and other efforts to protect the drug from competition from lower-priced copies known as biosimilars. Mr. Gonzalez said lowering drug prices alone wouldn’t increase access to prescription drugs for patients, including some Medicare patients. He said AbbVie provides medications to some patients who can’t afford them at no-cost or through co-pay assistance.
- **Bloomberg Government: Stage Set for Senate Paid Leave Debate:** The looming debate over a national paid leave mandate began to take shape yesterday in a Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions committee hearing where Republicans raised concerns about paying for it while Democrats predicted it would boost the economy and women’s workforce participation. Congress is set to consider creating that federally run paid family and medical leave program, as a part of the broader jobs, infrastructure, and family-support proposals pitched by Biden. Republicans yesterday questioned the wisdom of tax increases to pay for the program and the potential impact on small businesses.