

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Friday, May 22, 2020

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

- 11:30am: President Trump holds ceremony at White House honoring nation's veterans, POWs
- 12:30pm: Trump receives intelligence briefing
- 2pm: Press Sec. Kayleigh McEnany holds briefing
- VP Mike Pence travels to Atlanta to discuss state's opening with Gov. Brian Kemp; he'll also participate in a roundtable with restaurant owners and executives at Waffle House Headquarters

CONGRESS

- Senate holds pro forma session at 9am; lawmakers return on June 1
 - NOTE: It isn't immediately clear if Senate will act to approve a bipartisan proposal to extend the small-business Paycheck Protection Program and make other changes to the initiative during a pro forma session over break or wait until members return

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **The Wall Street Journal: Nursing Homes Don't Have To Report Pre-May Covid-19 Deaths To U.S. Officials:** A recently launched federal effort to collect data on the impact of the coronavirus in nursing homes will leave the full toll unclear, because a new rule doesn't require facilities to report deaths and infections that occurred before early May. The new rule, issued May 8, compels nursing homes to submit data on coronavirus cases and associated deaths to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. According to a form posted on the CDC website, the information only has to go back to the week leading up to their first filing, which was supposed to occur by May 17, while older data is optional. Nursing homes will provide current data at least weekly going forward.
- **The Wall Street Journal: Coronavirus Infections Jump By More Than A Million In Less Than Two Weeks:** As U.S. states and countries around the world look to boost their economies by loosening restrictions, coronavirus infections continue to spread, with more than a million new infections world-wide in less than two weeks. Globally there are more than 5.1 million recorded cases of the coronavirus, up from 3.85 million two weeks ago, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University, and more than 333,000 deaths. In the U.S., there have been nearly 1.58 million confirmed infections. The death toll reached 94,702, including 1,222 deaths recorded between 8 p.m. Wednesday and the same time Thursday, a Wall Street Journal analysis of Johns Hopkins data showed.

- **Bloomberg Government: Nursing Homes Short of Tests:** Most of the country's nursing homes can't test all their residents and staff for Covid-19, an industry survey shows, potentially thwarting efforts to stop outbreaks among the most vulnerable to the outbreak. State and federal agencies are asking nursing and assisted living homes to perform coronavirus tests regularly to help prevent outbreaks among the elderly and could face fines if they fail to do so. Eight states have rolled out universal testing plans for elder care facilities and are reporting mixed results.
- **The New York Times: \$1.2 Billion From U.S. To Drugmaker To Pursue Coronavirus Vaccine:** Expanding its pursuit of an inoculation against the coronavirus, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services said on Thursday it would provide "up to \$1.2 billion" to the drug company AstraZeneca to develop a potential vaccine from a laboratory at Oxford University. The deal with AstraZeneca is the fourth and by far the largest vaccine research agreement that the department has disclosed. The money will pay for a Phase 3 clinical trial of a potential vaccine in the United States this summer with about 30,000 volunteers.
- **The Associated Press: US Begins Crackdown On Unvetted Virus Blood Tests:** U.S. regulators are moving ahead with a crackdown on scores of antibody tests for the coronavirus that have not yet been shown to work. The Food and Drug Administration on Thursday published a list of more than two dozen test makers that have failed to file applications to remain on the market or already pulled their products. The agency said in a statement that it expects the tests "will not be marketed or distributed." It was unclear if any of the companies would face additional penalties.
- **Reuters: Next U.S. Coronavirus Rescue Package Not Too Far Off, McConnell Says:** U.S. Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell said on Thursday another stimulus package to deal with the impact of the coronavirus was "not too far off." "I think there is a high likelihood we will do another rescue package," McConnell told Fox News Channel in an interview. "But we need to be able to measure the impact of what we've already done, what we did right, what we did wrong ... We're not quite ready to intelligently lay down the next step, but it's not too far off."
- **Bloomberg Government: Dozens of Antibody Tests to Exit Market:** The FDA said yesterday that 27 coronavirus antibody tests will no longer be distributed in the U.S., as part of a previously-announced crackdown by the regulator on the tests. Antibody tests look for markers in the blood that indicate exposure to the coronavirus, but, in contrast with diagnostic tests, cannot determine whether a patient has an active Covid-19 infection.
 - The FDA's stricter stance on antibody tests follows an initially permissive policy that let hundreds of antibody tests be sold without the regulator's oversight and prompted criticism about the tests having accuracy issues. The 27 tests either didn't seek authorization from the FDA or had "significant problems" identified with them, according to the FDA.