

# American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Tuesday, May 26, 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

- 12:45pm: President Trump participates in ceremonial swearing-in of John Ratcliffe as the director of national intelligence
- 3pm: Trump meets with Sec. of State Mike Pompeo
- 4pm: Trump delivers remarks on protecting seniors with diabetes
- 1pm: VP Mike Pence leads video call with governors on Covid-19 response and economies
- 2pm: White House Press Sec. Kayleigh McEnany holds press briefing at White House

### CONGRESS

- House, Senate both hold pro forma sessions at 9:30am
  - Senators return June 1 to resume judicial nominations

## Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: New Medicare Rule Saves \$3.7 Billion:** A new rule by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services should increase access to telehealth services, provide more coverage options for Medicare beneficiaries with kidney failure, and offer wider benefits for others with chronic diseases. The wide ranging rule released Friday is expected to save an estimated \$3.65 billion over ten years, CMS said. The rule encourages private plans covering Medicare beneficiaries to increase telehealth offerings for those living in rural areas.
- **The Associated Press: Federal Coronavirus Testing Plan Puts Burden On States:** The 81-page document from the Department of Health and Human Services says, "State plans must establish a robust testing program that ensures adequacy of COVID-19 testing, including tests for contact tracing, and surveillance of asymptomatic persons to determine community spread." It says the federal government will "ensure that States have the collection supplies that they need through December 2020." To that end, the administration plans to acquire and distribute 100 million swabs and 100 million tubes of viral transport media. The HHS document, which The Washington Post first reported, recommends that all states "have an objective of testing a minimum of 2 percent of their population in May and June." (5/25)
- **The Associated Press: White House Goal On Testing Nursing Homes Unmet:** Nearly two weeks ago the White House urged governors to ensure that every nursing home resident and staff member be tested for the coronavirus within 14 days. It's not going to happen. A review by The Associated Press found that at least half of the states are not going to meet White House's deadline and some aren't even bothering to try. Only a handful of states, including

West Virginia and Rhode Island, have said they've already tested every nursing home resident. (Suderman, 5/25)

- **Bloomberg Government: Protections for Nonprofit Hospitals Sought:** Rep. Vicky Hartzler (R-Mo.) unveiled a measure on Friday that seeks to expand liability protections for nonprofit organizations as states begin to reopen their economies. Specifically, Hartzler's bill would provide "churches, faith-based nonprofits, and all 501(c)(3) organizations with increased liability protections" for any harm that could arise from being exposed to or infected by the coronavirus, according to a statement. Some examples of nonprofit hospitals include Ascension Health, Trinity Health, and Kaiser Permanente.
- **Bloomberg Government: Health Industry May Recuperate Relatively Fast:** A poll of Americans by the Kaiser Family Foundation indicates the health care industry could bounce back faster than other sectors of the economy this summer. A larger percentage of Americans (82%) surveyed said they expect to visit a doctor or a dentist in person over the next three months than visit a barber or salon (56%), or eat in-person at a restaurant (53%). Despite a public health crisis, the nation's health care sector has seen major job losses, as people stay away from hospitals and doctors' offices.
- **Bloomberg Government: HHS Watchdog to Brief Panel:** The House Oversight and Reform Committee will hold a video briefing today for members with Health and Human Services Department Principal Deputy Inspector General Christi Grimm. Lawmakers will question Grimm about her office's April 6 report that spotlighted "severe" shortage of testing and equipment at hospitals during the pandemic, according to a press release. Trump has criticized the report and earlier this month announced his intent to nominate a permanent replacement to Grimm's position. "IGs are more critical now than ever, as they work to ensure proper and effective use of the largest stimulus package in the history of our nation," the committee said in a statement Friday.
- **Bloomberg Government: Health-Care Deals Drop in April:** Health-care deals declined last month as the pandemic forced investors to delay or reconsider mergers and acquisitions. But transaction activity is expected to pick back up later this year as physicians and independent hospitals hard hit by canceled procedures look to partnering with larger health-care systems to help relaunch their businesses, some analysts say.
- **The Washington Post: Covid-19's Deadly New Surge Is In Rural America As States Re-Open:** The novel coronavirus arrived in an Indiana farm town mid-planting season and took root faster than the fields of seed corn, infecting hundreds and killing dozens. It tore through a pork processing plant and spread outward in a desolate stretch of the Oklahoma Panhandle. And in Colorado's sparsely populated eastern plains, the virus erupted in a nursing home and a pair of factories, burning through the crowded quarters of immigrant workers and a vulnerable elderly population. As the death toll nears 100,000, the disease caused by the virus has made a fundamental shift in who it touches and where it reaches in America, according to a Washington Post analysis of case data and interviews with public health professionals in several states. (Thebault and Hauslohner, 5/24)