

# American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Friday, May 28, 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 across the Potomac River to Virginia today, to participate in an event in Alexandria with Gov. Ralph Northam on the state's fight against Covid-19. The president and First Lady Jill Biden then travel to Hampton, Va., where they will deliver remarks at 1:20 p.m. The Bidens end their week with a trip at 3:30 p.m. to Wilmington, Del., for the weekend.

### CONGRESS:

- The Senate continues consideration of the Endless Frontier Act.

## Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **CIDRAP: Ten States Reach 70% COVID-19 Vaccination Goal:** So far ten states have reached President Biden's Jul 4 goal of vaccinating 70% of eligible residents against COVID-19, according to White House COVID-19 response coordinator Andy Slavitt. Pennsylvania joined Vermont, Hawaii, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maine, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and New Mexico as the tenth state to reach the 70% goal of having citizens with at least one dose of vaccine. Slavitt tweeted that another 10 states are above 65% coverage.
- **The Wall Street Journal: Resistance To Medicaid Expansion Sets Up 2022 Fight In Holdout States:** Democrats look to Medicaid expansion fights to juice 2022 races in battleground states like Wisconsin and Florida, and even red ones like Missouri. They have been boosted by several state ballot referendums showing popular support for the expansions, and a carrot-and-stick approach from the Biden administration aided by American Rescue Plan funds. Resistant Republicans are tying the expansions to other Democratic policies, like expanded unemployment benefits, that they say are hampering the economic recovery from the pandemic.
- **Bloomberg Government: Biden Budget Set to Omit Major Health Vows:** The proposal, set to be publicly unveiled today, offers a full accounting of Biden's previously released plans for trillions of dollars in new taxes and spending while also revealing for the first time how the administration sees inflation and growth being affected by enacting his agenda. Like most presidential budgets, the documents will be largely aspirational. Senate and House Democrats hold only narrow majorities, and lawmakers of both parties have made clear they're unlikely to adopt Biden's proposals in full. The budget release builds on a \$1.52 trillion discretionary spending request – that is, excluding required spending like Social Security – released by the White House in April that saw the president call for a

15.9% increase in domestic outlays, led by significant new investments in education and health-care programs. But the biggest controversy may stem from what Biden omits from his budget. The budget only accounts for legislation the president is pursuing this year, leaving out key campaign promises like the enactment of an Affordable Care Act public option, lowering the Medicare eligibility age, or letting Medicare negotiate drug prices. That's spurred the ire of some progressives, who urged Biden to prioritize health-care issues early on in his administration. And yesterday, more than 155 moderate and progressive House Democrats called on Biden in a letter to expand and improve Medicare as part of the American Families Plan, according to a statement. The Democrats, including Reps. Pramila Jayapal (Wash.) and Jared Golden (Maine), asked Biden to lower the Medicare age and allow it to negotiate drug prices.

- **Stat: FDA Revives Program Trump Administration Ended Based On 'Inaccuracies':** In an unexpected move, the Food and Drug Administration is reversing a decision by the Trump administration to end a controversial program that forces drug makers to win regulatory approval for medicines already on the market, but were never actually approved. At issue is the Unapproved Drugs Initiative, which was launched in 2006 to gather data on numerous medicines that had been available for years on a grandfathered basis because they predated stricter approval requirements. But the program prompted complaints that some companies established monopolies after winning approval for a drug that, in some cases, led to big price hikes or shortages.
- **Modern Healthcare: How COVID-19 Warped Payer-Provider Contract Negotiations:** A year later, some experts believe health systems may be using their post-COVID-19 publicity glow to pressure insurers into rate increases, pointing to a rash of recent tense negotiations erupting into the public sphere. "That's something we need to watch out for the, kind of the afterglow of public support, and then the argument that 'we lost money, we need to make it up,'" said Glenn Melnick, a professor of healthcare at the University of Southern California, who conducts research on payer-provider negotiations. "I do think that we will see that this year and next.
- **Bloomberg Government: Health Deals Keep Pace as Pandemic Wanes:** Health mergers and acquisitions continued at a hot pace in April with 207 deals either closed or announced. That's the third month in 2021 that broke the 200-deal threshold. Only four months last year had up to 200 deals as the Covid-19 pandemic persisted, according to Larry Kocot, leader of KPMG's Center for Healthcare Regulatory Insight. Projections of continued strong economic growth suggest that M&A activity will "remain robust for the coming months," he said.