

# American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Friday, May 29, 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

- 11am: President Trump receives intelligence briefing
- 4pm: Trump participates in roundtable with execs from retail, hospitality, food and lodging industries
- 8:15am: Vice President Mike Pence and Second Lady Karen Pence en route to Marietta, Ga.
- 11am: Pence participates in memorial service for Christian evangelist Ravi Zacharias
- 12:30pm: Pence participates in roundtable talk with small business owners on economic re-open
- 2:40pm: Pence departs, en route to D.C. with expected 4:05 pm arrival

### CONGRESS

- Senate returns Monday

## Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **The Associated Press: Travel Disruptions Challenge Global Transplant Deliveries:** Over the past two months, as air travel ground to a halt, Mishel Zrian has crisscrossed the Atlantic and the United States dozens of times, sleeping in empty airports and unable to return home to see his family in Israel, all in a race against time to deliver life-saving transplants. Zrian is a courier hired by Israel's Ezer Mizion bone marrow donor registry, which has had to perform logistical acrobatics to get its transplants to their destinations amid the travel disruptions caused by the pandemic.
- **Bloomberg Government: Thune Sees Water, Transport, Virus Bills Coming This Year:** Republican Whip Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.) yesterday laid out a plan for the rest of the year, including focusing on water infrastructure legislation and a surface transportation program that must be reauthorized by Sept. 30. Next week, the Senate will take up a bill to fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund and address a massive backlog of national parks maintenance projects. Two water infrastructure bills were approved May 11 by the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee and are also priorities, Thune said.
- **The Wall Street Journal: House Passes Bill Loosening Rules On PPP Small-Business Loans:** The House approved a bipartisan bill that would loosen

requirements on hundreds of billions of dollars in small-business loans, responding to concerns from employers struggling to stay open during the coronavirus pandemic. The House bill reduces the level of Paycheck Protection Program funds that must be used for payroll to 60% from 75%. The bill also gives borrowers up to 24 weeks to use the funds, up from the eight set in the initial bill passed in March, and extends the deadline to rehire workers to Dec. 31. The bill passed 417-1 on Thursday, with many of the Democratic votes read into the record by their assigned proxy, taking advantage of a rule change this week that allows remote voting for the first time.

- **Politico: Pandemic Upends State Plans To Expand Health Insurance:** The coronavirus pandemic has derailed Democrats' efforts in statehouses across the country to give more Americans government-backed health coverage. A once-unlikely deal in deep-red Kansas to expand Medicaid to about 150,000 poor people has been tabled for this year. In California, Gov. Gavin Newsom has abandoned plans to extend coverage to 27,000 undocumented immigrant seniors after the pandemic blew a \$54 billion hole in the state budget. And in Colorado, the pandemic has stalled a heated legislative debate over a public option to compete with private insurers – a centerpiece of presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden's health care platform.
- **Bloomberg Government: For-Profit Hospitals Seek Lower Rates:** The Federation of American Hospitals, which represents more than 1,000 investor-owned hospitals, urged the Senate yesterday to redefine the terms of Medicare loans thousands of providers have taken out during the pandemic. They want Congress to restart the program and decrease the interest rate for the Medicare Accelerated and Advance Payments Program, among other changes.
  - The group also wants HHS to change how it sends out CARES stimulus funds to target "lost revenue" and Covid-19-related costs. That is contrary to how other hospital groups that represent nonprofits have sought to shape the payments.
- **The Wall Street Journal: Blood Of Recovered Covid-19 Patients Is Becoming A Hot Commodity:** The blood business is booming. This normally obscure trade has been set alight by the race to develop Covid-19 antibody tests, which use blood to tell whether someone has already been infected with the coronavirus. The tests are seen as key to easing lockdowns that have shut down economies around the world. However, while surging demand has proven a boon for the traders known as blood brokers who source this commodity, diagnostic companies say high prices for the blood of recovered Covid-19 patients are posing a hurdle to developing tests.
- **Bloomberg Government: Hospitals Walk Tightrope as Workers Speak Out:** Clashes between hospitals and their employees who speak out about their fears and frustrations over the virus – either in-house, publicly on social media, or in the

press—has sparked a new litigation trend. Sarah Cusick, a hospital worker in D.C., sued her employer for wrongful termination, claiming the hospital fired her for social media posts voicing concerns that it wasn't following federal and D.C. patient screening and social distancing policies. Similar lawsuits are likely in the pipeline, according to one attorney.

- **Stat: Despite Economic Crisis, Prominent Health Tech Startups Draw Big Funding:** It was expected to be a last-minute salvo: As much of the world braced for a probable pandemic-era recession, some health tech startups nailed significant funding in the first quarter of 2020. Analysts eyed the data cautiously, warning that the trend was likely short-lived. But as March rolled into April, and then seeped like molasses into May, the money kept flowing. Just this month, three health tech companies raised more than \$100 million each.