American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Tuesday, June 1, 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 will deliver remarks to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Tulsa Race Massacre
  - 2:45 PM ET: Biden tours Greenwood Cultural Center.
  - 4:15 PM ET: Biden delivers remarks.

CONGRESS:

- The House and Senate are out this week.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Limits of Woodcock’s Role Highlight Need for Permanent FDA Head:** Acting FDA Commissioner Janet Woodcock is a big proponent of modernizing the clinical trial system, but focusing on such a long-term project will be difficult without a permanent spot as agency leader, FDA advocates say. There’s a 210-day statutory limit for how long an acting commissioner can work in a Senate-confirmed role. That means the 35-year veteran could only remain in her role until mid-to-late August unless Biden nominates her or someone else to the spot beforehand, according to the nonprofit Alliance for a Stronger FDA.

- **Modern Healthcare: Biden Budget Boosts Funds For Health, Pandemic Preparedness:** President Joe Biden’s proposed budget requests a 23% funding increase for HHS and urges Congress to take action on high drug costs while expanding and improving health coverage. The fiscal 2022 budget plan reiterates Biden’s calls on Congress to pass legislation allowing the federal government to negotiate for lower prices on drugs covered by Medicare, reducing deductibles in ACA plans, improving Medicare benefits to include dental, hearing and vision, creating a public option, lowering the Medicare eligibility age and closing the Medicaid coverage gap in non-expansion states.

- **Fox News: Diabetes Vaccine Shows Promise For Some Patients In Early Trial:** In a small, early study, a vaccine for type 1 diabetes helped preserve the body's natural production of insulin, at least in a subset of newly diagnosed patients. In patients with type 1 diabetes, the body's immune system attacks the beta cells in the pancreas that produce insulin, a hormone that’s necessary for cells to absorb glucose from the bloodstream. These patients need lifelong insulin injections to stay alive. And because so many hidden factors inside the body can affect how much insulin a person needs, people who are insulin-dependent often have high and low
blood sugar. High blood sugar, or hyperglycemia, damages the organs over the long term, while low blood sugar, or hypoglycemia, can lead to seizures or death in the short term.

- **Bloomberg Government: Pelosi’s Majority Likely to Grow With New Mexico Vote**: A House special election today in New Mexico is likely to add a Democrat to Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s (D-Calif.) slim House majority. State Rep. Melanie Stansbury is favored to defeat Republican state Sen. Mark Moores in the Albuquerque-based 1st District. Former Rep. Deb Haaland vacated her seat in the Democratic-leaning area in March to become Biden’s Interior secretary. Stansbury’s election would give Pelosi a 220th vote in the Democratic Caucus and fill one of five vacant seats — three of them most recently held by Democrats.

- **KHN: Biden Administration Signals It’s In No Rush To Allow Canadian Drug Imports**: The Biden administration said Friday it has no timeline on whether it will allow states to import drugs from Canada, an effort that was approved under President Donald Trump as a key strategy to control costs. Six states have passed laws to start such programs, and Florida, Colorado and New Mexico are the furthest along in plans to get federal approval.

- **USA Today: US Companies Can Mandate Vaccinations, Federal Agency Says**: U.S. companies can mandate that employees must be vaccinated against COVID-19, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission announced in a Friday statement. Federal EEO laws do not prevent employers from requiring that all employees physically entering a workplace be vaccinated as long as employers comply with the reasonable accommodation provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act and other laws, according to the statement. Employers may also offer incentives to employees to get vaccinated, "as long as the incentives are not coercive," the statement said.

- **Modern Healthcare: Nursing Home Price Per Bed Climbs Nearly 22% In First Quarter**: The total price per bed for nursing homes jumped nearly 22% during the first quarter of 2021, increasing after four straight years of year-over-year losses, according to a new housing survey by JLL Valuation Advisory, a professional services firm that specializes in real estate and investment management. The average price per bed rose to $90,700 during the first quarter, which is the second-highest annual price point for nursing homes on record, according to the report. Gains are largely attributed to government stimulus funds, including about $4.9 billion sent to nursing homes from HHS and $100 billion sent to qualified healthcare providers from the CARES Act, which helped operators maintain cash flows, the report said.

- **Bloomberg: Sunscreen With Leukemia-Causing Benzene Is Latest Summer Worry**: Four decades ago, the U.S. government used rarely deployed emergency powers to reduce workers’ exposure to benzene, a chemical linked to a five-fold increased risk of potentially deadly leukemia. After a landmark study in 1977 highlighted its health risks, employers and manufacturers were forced to limit the industrial compound in their workplaces. Yet just within the past few months, elevated levels of benzene have appeared in some hand sanitizers, and on Tuesday, an analysis by an independent testing lab revealed its presence in some sunscreens and after-sun skin soothers.