

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Monday, June 14, 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

- Biden is in Brussels today for a NATO summit. This afternoon he will meet with Estonia's Prime Minister Kaja Kallas, Latvia President Egils Levits, and Lithuania President Gitanas Nausėda at NATO headquarters. Biden today also plans to meet with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. This evening, Biden will meet with Turkey President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

CONGRESS:

- The Senate is out. The House meets at 11:30 a.m. for a pro forma session.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **AP: To Curb Drug Prices, Democrats Still Seeking A Balance:** Democrats are committed to passing legislation this year to curb prescription drug prices, but they're still disagreeing on how to cut costs for patients and taxpayers while preserving profits that lure investors to back potentially promising treatments. It boils down to finding a balance: How big a stick should Medicare have to negotiate prices with pharmaceutical companies?
- **Bloomberg Government: Nominations:** The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee meets Wednesday to vote on nominations including Dawn Myers O'Connell to be assistant secretary for preparedness and response, and Miriam E. Delphin-Rittmon to be assistant secretary for mental health and substance use, both for the Health and Human Services Department.
- **Bloomberg Government: HHS Policies:** The House Education and Labor Committee plans a Wednesday hearing with Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra on the agency's policies and priorities.
- **AP: Bill Would Permanently Expand Telehealth Services:** A new bill in Washington would permanently expand telehealth services under Medicare and allow patients in rural areas without access to broadband to use audio services, U.S. Sen. Jeanne Shaheen said. "It should not have taken a pandemic for Medicare to finally unlock the potential of telehealth services – and now we need to make sure that these vital telehealth services continue to be available to patients long after the COVID-19 pandemic is over," Shaheen said in a statement.
- **Bloomberg Government: Regulatory Agenda Seeks More Active Government:** Biden laid out his first regulatory to-do list on Friday, detailing his ambitions to dramatically expand the

scope of the government's involvement in health care. The list, typically issued twice per year, marks a stark departure from the Trump administration's focus on reducing the size, cost, and scope of U.S. regulations.

- Biden's HHS will propose repealing a provision in a Trump-era rule that allows states to use brokers and health insurers to directly enroll consumers in Affordable Care Act plans. Such a provision would largely bypass the federal HealthCare.gov exchange site.
 - The administration is forging ahead with a divisive, Trump-era regulatory proposal that would limit the government's ability to control prices on drugs developed from federally funded research. The National Institute of Standards and Technology set an October deadline to update the Bayh-Dole Act, the 1980 law that enables universities to retain patent rights on inventions discovered from government-funded research. The proposal would clarify the law – which allows the government to step in and license federally funded inventions to third parties in certain circumstances – can't be exercised by an agency primarily to lower costs.
- **Fierce Healthcare: HHS Gives Providers Flexibility On Spending COVID-19 Relief Funds, Updates Reporting Requirements:** The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) left intact a June 30 deadline for providers to use COVID-19 relief funds they accrued from April 10 through June 30 of 2020 after a major push from hospital groups asking for more time. But the agency did give more flexibility for providers to spend funding if they got it after June 30, 2020.
 - **Axios: How America's Top Hospitals Send Patient Costs Soaring:** In February 2018, Stephen Swett went to the emergency room at Westchester Medical Center in New York seeking help for withdrawal from Suboxone, which treats opioid addiction. Swett – a 44-year old truck driver – says he sat on a gurney until he was discharged. Then in June of last year, the hospital filed a court summons, the beginning of its attempt to collect the \$2,539.43 it said Swett owed for his trip.