

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Wednesday, June 17, 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

- 2pm: President Trump announces “Prevents” task force revamp, relating to veterans and mental health

CONGRESS

- 9:30am: Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell joins Sen. Tim Scott and other Republicans to unveil policing bill
- Senate meets at 10am; set to resume consideration of H.R. 1957, the lands bill; to vote on passage at 11:45am
- 10am: House Judiciary Committee considers House Democrats’ Justice in Policing Act

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Trillions in Stimulus Go Unchecked:** The U.S. has spent more than half of \$3 trillion in economic rescue funds passed by Congress -- with little of the oversight intended to ensure the money goes to the right places.
 - Three new oversight bodies are barely functional: A special inspector general was only recently sworn in, a congressional panel still lacks a chairman and staff, and President Donald Trump quickly removed the official who was going to lead a separate accountability committee. At the same time, about \$2 trillion in stimulus money has already been distributed, according to an estimate from the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, a nonpartisan group focused on fiscal policy.
 - The sheer size of the pandemic response means there’s a wide swath of issues to investigate. But mistrust in Washington is so deep that the oversight groups’ investigations are already mired in politics. Leaders of both parties have failed to agree on a chairman to lead the congressional oversight panel. And Democrats are already voicing concerns on whether Trump’s hand-picked special inspector general for the stimulus can be independent from his former boss.
- **Bloomberg Government: Health Care Inequality:** The House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee scheduled a hearing today on racial and ethnic disparities in Covid-19 care and the health care system. Committee Chairman Frank Pallone (D-N.J.) yesterday wrote to Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Administrator Seema Verma to reiterate his request the agency release demographic claims data for the virus based on race, ethnicity and gender.

- **Stat: Major Study Finds Steroid Reduces Deaths In Patients With Severe Covid-19:** A cheap, readily available steroid drug reduced deaths by a third in patients hospitalized with Covid-19 in a large study, the first time a therapy has been shown to possibly improve the odds of survival with the condition in the sickest patients. Full data from the study have not been published or subjected to scientific scrutiny. But outside experts on Tuesday immediately embraced the top-line results. The drug, dexamethasone, is widely available and is used to treat conditions including rheumatoid arthritis, asthma, and some cancers.
- **The Wall Street Journal: HHS Resumes Central Role In Pandemic Response Oversight:** The Department of Health and Human Services is taking on more oversight of the nation's coronavirus response as cases in some states climb, an abrupt shift from April when the agency was under fire for its handling of the initial stages of the crisis. The shift is happening in part because the president and his aides are prioritizing reopening and other economic issues they believe will play to the president's conservative base ahead of the election, according to people familiar with the planning. The move predated the nationwide protests following the killing of a black man in Minneapolis police custody.
- **The Associated Press: US Expects Insurers To Cover COVID Vaccine Without Copays:** U.S. officials said Tuesday they expect health insurance companies will cover vaccines for COVID-19 without charging copays, once those vaccines are developed and become available. At a briefing for reporters, a senior Trump administration official said the government has been talking with insurers about offering vaccines at no cost to patients. The industry earlier made a similar commitment to cover testing for the coronavirus without charging copays.