

# American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Monday, June 21, 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 plans to meet with top U.S. financial regulators at 1:45 p.m. to discuss the health of the system they oversee and how his administration's priorities, including on climate change and inclusion, can best be addressed. The meeting comes at a critical stage for Biden's infrastructure push and after Fed officials said last week that they anticipated two interest rate increases by the end of 2023.

### CONGRESS:

- The Senate plans to vote to advance the nomination of Christopher Fonzone to be general counsel for the Office of the Director of National Intelligence
- The House meets for a pro forma session at 9 a.m.

## Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Axios: Pricey Drugs Paid By Medicare Lack Cost-Effectiveness Data:** Nearly \$50 billion or a third of Medicare Part D costs in 2016 were for drugs with absent cost-effectiveness analyses, according to a report from JAMA Network Open. The lack of a quality analysis that weighs the relative cost with outcomes of these drugs may create hurdles toward efforts aimed at addressing drug spending in terms of value.
- **Bloomberg Government: Powell Heads to Capitol Hill as Market Churns:** Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell is under pressure from investors to square the central bank's new inflation concerns with its ten-month-old commitment to seek broad and inclusive gains in the labor market. The Fed's meeting last week ignited confusion about its new approach toward keeping price increases in check and job growth going. Powell himself may face inquiries when he appears before lawmakers tomorrow to give them an update on the Fed's support for the economy through the pandemic.
- **Bloomberg Government: Biden HHS Pulls Discount Policy:** HHS is withdrawing a proclamation calling on drugmakers to offer hotly contested price discounts for low-income health-care providers to fend off litigation, but the agency won't back down from fighting individual firms. The HHS in a 2020 advisory opinion called on drugmakers participating in the federal 340B program to deliver drugs bought by health centers to their contract pharmacies has been withdrawn to avoid "unnecessary litigation," HHS said,
- **Bloomberg Government: Ruling Paves Way for Fixing Flaws in Biosimilar System:** The Supreme Court's decision to uphold Obamacare preserves a pathway for low-cost versions of

biologic drugs to hit the market while also stirring a fresh debate over how to fix the system's shortcomings. The Biologics Price Competition and Innovation Act is tucked into Obamacare and lets drugmakers get around hurdles like certain extensive clinical trials to sell biosimilars – versions of biologics that mimic the originals.

- **ABC News: Severe National Blood Shortage May Force Doctors To Augment Patient Care, Officials Say:** As the COVID-19 pandemic comes to a close, more Americans are seeking medical care -- only to find roadblocks to long-awaited elective surgeries or unexpected traumatic injuries: a critical national shortage of blood. In June, the blood supply dropped to "red" level, indicating dangerously low supply at blood centers nation-wide, according to the AABB Interorganizational Task Force on Domestic Disasters and Acts of Terrorism.
- **Bloomberg Government: Pfizer CEO Urges Biden to Form Coalition to Lower Drug Costs:** Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla on Friday urged Biden to form a bipartisan coalition in Washington to address high drug costs. There's a great opportunity for Biden to take the initiative to "reduce significantly the cost of medicines for the patients, which is the thing that is now problematic," Bourla said in an interview with David Westin on Bloomberg Television's "Balance of Power" show. In the interview, Bourla didn't discuss specifics on what reforms he might want to see from the government. In an earnings call in May, though, he said the three key areas the company would like to see from Congress and the Biden administration are rebate reform, capping beneficiary cost-sharing in Medicare Part D and incentivizing the uptake of biosimilars.
- **Bloomberg Government: HHS Veteran Who Angered Trump Tapped for IG:** Biden will nominate Christi Grimm to be inspector general for the Department of Health and Human Services, the White House announced Friday. Grimm received national attention in April 2020 when President Donald Trump criticized a report put out by her office that found hospitals were suffering widespread scarcity of Covid-19 test kits and personal protective equipment – shortages that would persist for months.
  - A former official at the National Wildlife Federation who served in the Obama administration is Biden's pick to manage the Interior Department's energy and land programs – solidifying environmentalist oversight of federally-owned oil, gas and other energy resources. Laura Daniel-Davis was nominated to be assistant secretary for Land and Minerals Management, the White House said.
- **Politico: CDC Director: Delta Variant To 'Probably' Become Dominant Strain In U.S.:** The very contagious and possibly more harmful Delta variant of the coronavirus "probably" will become the dominant strain in the United States in the coming months, Rochelle Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said Friday on "Good Morning America." "It's more transmissible than the Alpha variant or U.K. variant that we have here. We saw that quickly become the dominant strain in a period of one or two months," Walensky said. "I anticipate that is going to be what happens with the Delta strain here."