

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Thursday, June 24, 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 travels to North Carolina today to discuss the administration's vaccination effort. Biden is scheduled to visit a mobile vaccination unit at the Green Road Community Center in Raleigh, N.C. at 4:50 p.m. Biden will speak at 5:15 p.m. on the importance of vaccinations.

CONGRESS:

- The House plans to consider four measures, including two resolutions to undue Trump administration rules.
- The Senate is scheduled to vote on legislation that aims to help farmers, ranchers, and foresters participate in carbon credit-trading markets. The chamber will also vote on a judicial nomination.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **The Washington Post: The Under-The-Radar Fight Over A New Health Agency:** There's at least one proposal leftover from the Trump administration that President Biden is set on reviving: the creation of the Advance Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H). In the administration's debut budget proposal, the National Institutes of Health received \$6.5 billion to launch the new agency modeled after the military's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). ARPA-H would accelerate the development of medical treatments for Alzheimer's disease, cancer, cardiovascular disease, and more. But there's a battle brewing over where exactly the agency should be housed – and how it should be structured to have the most impact.
- **Bloomberg Government: Pressure Mounts to Cover Those in Medicaid Gap:** The next major legislation package moving through Congress will include provisions to extend insurance coverage to people caught in the "Medicaid gap," key congressional Democrats say. House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn (D-S.C.) said he's been in White House talks on including in Biden's jobs and infrastructure legislation an extension of federal insurance to people in the 12 states that haven't opted to expand their Medicaid programs.
 - Still, the administration can act on its own to further Biden's campaign promise to get more Americans affordable health coverage and shrink the number of uninsured, even though Congress is mulling broader measures. Tweaks to regulations under the Affordable Care Act and other health laws can be implemented while lawmakers debate major proposals to expand coverage, such as forcing several states to expand for Medicaid, the low-income health program.

- **Bloomberg Government: Eshoo Wants Diversity Targets in Drug Trials:** Drug companies would be required to set targets and develop action plans for diversifying their clinical trial populations under a bill in the works by a key House lawmaker in health policy. Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-Calif.) said the bill ultimately would boost confidence among Black, Hispanic, and other groups historically underrepresented in studies used by the FDA to decide whether to approve these products.
- **Politico: FDA To Add Warning About Rare Heart Inflammation To Moderna, Pfizer Vaccine Fact Sheets:** FDA plans to "move rapidly" to add a warning to fact sheets for Pfizer and Moderna's Covid-19 vaccines about the rare risk of developing inflammatory heart conditions, an agency official said Wednesday. "Based on the available data, a warning statement in the fact sheets for both health care providers and vaccine recipients and caregivers would be warranted in this situation," Doran Fink, deputy director of FDA's vaccines division, said during a CDC advisory committee meeting on Covid vaccines.
- **Bloomberg Government: Medicare Covers More Research Under Biomedical Bill:** Medicare beneficiaries could participate in more clinical trials without worrying about bills for lab tests and other routine costs as part of draft follow-up legislation to a landmark law on biomedical innovation. The draft bill, known as Cures 2.0, marks the latest effort on Capitol Hill to broaden access to clinical trials.
- **KHN: Biden Quietly Transforms Medicaid Safety Net:** The Biden administration is quietly engineering a series of expansions to Medicaid that may bolster protections for millions of low-income Americans and bring more people into the program. Biden's efforts — which have been largely overshadowed by other economic and health initiatives — represent an abrupt reversal of the Trump administration's moves to scale back the safety-net program.
- **Modern Healthcare: Hospitals Again Ask HHS For More Time To Spend Relief Funds:** Hospitals are again pleading with the Biden administration for more time to spend COVID-19 relief grants received before June 30, 2020. HHS' latest guidance, released June 11, laid out four separate deadlines for when providers need to spend or return their Provider Relief Fund grants. But the deadline for returning money received before June 30, 2020 was unchanged: Providers will still have to give back any unspent money by June 30. In a letter to HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra this week, AHA CEO Rick Pollack urged him to let providers keep PRF money distributed before June 30, 2020 until the end of the COVID public health emergency or June 30, 2022, the final deadline in HHS' most recent guidance.