

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Monday, July 12, 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

- 12:15 p.m. - Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki.
- 1:15 p.m. - The President meets with the Attorney General and local leaders, including law enforcement, elected officials, and a community violence intervention expert, to discuss his Administration's comprehensive strategy to reduce gun crimes

CONGRESS:

- Senate in session.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Order Revisits Trump Answers on Drug Prices:** Biden's order resurrects Trump administration policy plays geared toward cutting down drug prices, calling for efforts that policy analysts say may face challenges getting off the ground. The order includes measures to bolster health-care industry competition in the interest of lowering drug prices.
 - Roadblocks remain for both efforts to get off the ground, analysts say. For Canadian drug imports, legal experts say a lack of buy-in from Big Pharma and Canadian leaders could derail the efforts. Meanwhile, the FTC hasn't made much practical progress in the area of "pay-for-delay" settlements despite making the area a priority for focus.
 - Meanwhile, the order nudges regulators to update their guidelines for reviewing hospital mergers, but in many parts of the country, markets for health-care services and medical insurance are already highly concentrated. Drugmakers' power to set prices is often based on natural monopolies from patents on medications.
 - Across the health-care industry, potent lobbying groups are adept at harnessing political support to their advantage. Hospital trade groups pointed to their industry's performance during the coronavirus crisis and said stricter antitrust regulation could threaten access in rural areas.
- **Bloomberg Government: Drug Market Competition:** The Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Competition Policy, Antitrust, and Consumer Rights plans a hearing tomorrow on anticompetitive conduct in prescription drug markets.
- **Bloomberg Government: Court Leaves Fight Over Medicaid Work Rules in Limbo:** Chief Justice John Roberts closed the latest Supreme Court term earlier this month with the fight over work requirements for Medicaid beneficiaries unresolved. Trump administration

approvals of programs in Arkansas and New Hampshire requiring all Medicaid beneficiaries to work or participate in job-skills training to remain eligible for the health-care coverage sparked the dispute. The justices put the case on hold in April after the Biden administration announced the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services was withdrawing the prior administration's approvals.

- The case is now on life support and likely won't be fully put to bed until early next term, some health law scholars say. The delay gives Arkansas time to pursue its administrative appeal of the Biden administration's decision to withdraw the prior approval even though it's unlikely the state will prevail.
- **The Wall Street Journal: Biden Competition Order Targets Hospital Mergers, Surprise Medical Bills:** The White House call for revised enforcement guidelines to promote hospital competition will likely amplify federal scrutiny of hospital mergers, which health economists say have raised prices. The Biden administration order, released Friday, encouraged the Justice Department and Federal Trade Commission to review and possibly revise their merger guidelines. It highlighted hospital consolidation, which the order said has harmed consumers.
- **NPR: Virus Cases Start To Rise Again, Especially Where Vaccination Rates Lag:** As the weather warmed up this year, coronavirus case numbers plummeted, and life in the U.S. started to feel almost normal. But in recent weeks, that progress has stalled. The vaccination campaign has slowed, and the delta variant is spreading rapidly. And new infections, which had started to plateau about a month ago, are going up slightly nationally. New, localized hot spots are emerging, especially in stretches of the South, the Midwest and the West. And, according to an analysis NPR conducted with Johns Hopkins University, those surges are likely driven by pockets of dangerously low vaccination rates.
- **Roll Call: Biden Orders Agencies To Look At Drug Costs, Hospital Consolidation:** "What we've seen over the past few decades is less competition and more concentration that holds our economy back. We see it in big agriculture and big tech and big pharma and the list goes on," Biden said before signing the executive order at the White House Friday. "Take prescription drugs: just a handful of companies control the market for many vital medicines, giving them leverage over everyone else to charge whatever they want," the president said.