

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Thursday, July 15, 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 deliver remarks at 11:45 a.m. on the first day of payments after changes to distribution of the child tax credit.
- The president will host German Chancellor Angela Merkel at the White House starting at 2 p.m. Biden and Merkel will hold a bilateral meeting at 2:25 p.m. to discuss climate change, Covid-19, and security and regional challenges.
- The pair will hold a joint press conference at 4:15 p.m., followed by dinner at 6:30 p.m.

CONGRESS:

- The House Appropriations Committee is scheduled to mark up the fiscal 2022 Commerce-Justice-Science and Labor-HHS-Education bills.
- The Senate plans to vote on three of Biden's nominees to the Treasury and Veterans Affairs departments and U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Full Committee Markup of Health Spending Bill:** The full House Appropriations Committee will today to mark up the fiscal 2022 Labor-HHS-Education bills. The Department of Health and Human Services would be funded at \$119.8 billion. Bans on federal funds for abortion would be lifted and family planning grants to Planned Parenthood would be restored under the bill.
- **KHN: Senate Democrats' Plan Boosts Spending On Medicare, ACA Subsidies, Long-Term Care:** The budget package Democrats are assembling in Congress would likely provide the biggest jolt to the American health care system since the passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010, according to sources familiar with work on the plan. Democrats in the Senate announced Tuesday night that they had reached a framework for a \$3.5 trillion budget plan that would cover health care, education, climate and tax changes sought by lawmakers and President Joe Biden.
- **Bloomberg Government: Bipartisan Senate Drug Cost Bill:** Sen. Bob Menendez (D-N.J.) is backing legislation that aims to strengthen Medicare Part D and tackle drug costs. Menendez, who has opposed drug price negotiation legislation in the past, introduced a bill with Sen. Bill

Cassidy (R-La.) that would cap what seniors on Medicare pay for medicines at \$3,100 per year and make other changes to the public health insurance program.

- **Bloomberg Government: Medicare Expansion Would Aid Seniors:** Senate Democrats' plan to expand Medicare coverage would help a growing senior population often struggling with hefty out-of-pocket medical expenses, potentially providing ballast for the economy in coming years. The plan aims to expand vision, dental and hearing benefits for Medicare recipients, who are disproportionately those over 65 years old.
 - That would provide tens of millions of seniors -- many of whom have low incomes -- with care that they don't currently have, likely boosting not only health spending but also freeing up money to go toward other goods and services, particularly essential goods.
- **Roll Call: HHS: 2 Million People Chose Health Plans During Enrollment Period:** More than 2 million people have signed up for health insurance coverage on the federal or state exchanges from mid-February through the end of June during a special enrollment period, the Department of Health and Human Services announced Wednesday. The report includes the 600,000 people who signed up for a plan on one of the 15 state-based exchanges, who were not included in last month's report that found 1.2 million people had selected a plan on the federal HealthCare.gov website. As of the end of last month, that number rose to 1.5 million.
- **Modern Healthcare: Providers Vow To Fight Medicare Pay Freeze:** The lobbying began just minutes after CMS released a physician payment rule for next year that doesn't include pay raises for doctors, physician assistants, nurse practitioners and others. Provider groups are geared up for a rerun of the battle over this year's physician fee schedule, which originally financed a pay increase for primary care providers by cutting payments to specialists. Congress intervened after a sustained lobbying effort that culminated in an across-the-board 3.75% pay rise for the 2021 calendar year, at a cost of \$3 billion to taxpayers. CMS issued the proposed rule for 2022 on Tuesday.