

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Thursday, July 22, 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 will deliver remarks at 2:15 p.m. from the White House on legislation cleared by the House and Senate that would deposit money collected by the federal government under deferred prosecution or nonprosecution agreements into the Crime Victims Fund.
- Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris will meet at 4 p.m. at the White House with union and business leaders to discuss infrastructure efforts.

CONGRESS:

- The House will vote today on whether to offer more visas to Afghan nationals who assisted U.S. forces during the two-decade war there.
- The Senate plans to vote on the nomination of Jill Hruby to be undersecretary for nuclear security at the Department of Energy.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **The New York Times: Biden Predicts The F.D.A. Will Give Final Approval To A Covid Vaccine By The Fall:** President Biden told a town hall audience in Ohio on Wednesday evening that he expected the Food and Drug Administration would give final approval “quickly” for Covid-19 vaccines, as he pressed for skeptical Americans to get vaccinated and stop another surge of the pandemic. Mr. Biden said he was not intervening in the decision of government scientists, but pointed toward a potential decision soon from the F.D.A. to give final approval for the vaccines, which are currently authorized for emergency use. Many medical professionals have pushed for the final approval, saying it could help increase uptake of the vaccines.
- **Bloomberg Government: Senate Judiciary Markup:** The Senate Judiciary Committee is scheduled to mark up several pharma-related bills:
 - S. 1425, to enable the Federal Trade Commission to deter filing of sham citizen petitions to cover an attempt to interfere with approval of a competing generic drug or biosimilar;
 - S. 1428, to prohibit brand name drug companies from compensating generic drug companies to delay the entry of a generic drug into the market; and
 - S. 1388, to require the FTC to study the role of intermediaries in the pharmaceutical supply chain and provide Congress with appropriate policy recommendations.

- **Modern Healthcare: Cigna Paying Members To Use Biosimilars Draws Providers Ire:** Cigna pays members to switch to biological drugs that it says are clinically equivalent and cheaper – a new policy provoking objections from providers, who maintain that it crosses the line between covering medical expenses and practicing medicine – and that it threatens patients' health. Cigna, a Bloomfield, Connecticut-based insurer with 14 million members, offers patients \$500 prepaid debit cards when they switch to biosimilar versions of the biologic drugs Cosentyx, which is used to treat psoriasis and certain types of arthritis, and Remicade, which is used on patients with psoriasis, arthritis and gastrointestinal conditions such as Crohn's disease. Patients can choose between two biosimilar medications for each of the brand-name drugs.
- **Bloomberg Government: Delay to Rebate Rule in Infrastructure Deal Stirs Ire:** Republican senators blocked debate on a still unfinished infrastructure plan yesterday as negotiators of both parties struggle to complete details of the \$579 billion package. As talks continue, reports signaling senators may include a delay to a Medicare rebate rule spurred criticism from PhRMA. "Lawmakers are threatening to gut a rule that would provide patients meaningful relief at the pharmacy," a top PhRMA official said in a statement.
- **Bloomberg Government: Hospital Groups Urge Mandatory Vaccine Staff Policies:** The American Hospital Association and America's Essential Hospitals urged hospitals to mandate Covid-19 vaccination for health-care employees. "Health care professionals and other dedicated essential hospital staff have led the nation's response to COVID-19, and they can lead the way to recovery by making a strong and unequivocal statement on the value of vaccination," AEH President and CEO Bruce Siegel said in a statement.