

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Friday, July 30, 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 meets with governors from states affected by wildfires to discuss prevention and response this morning. This afternoon, the president will host Cuban-American leaders to discuss recent demonstrations in Cuba and the administration's response.

CONGRESS:

- The House is in session this morning and could take up the evictions moratorium measure and several other bills under expedited procedure.
- The Senate plans a procedural vote on the bipartisan infrastructure package as well as Biden's nomination to lead the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **KHN: Diabetes Drug's New Weight Loss Formula Fuels Cost-Benefit Debate:** The long list of side effects that follow ads for the newer expensive drugs to treat Type 2 diabetes sometimes include an unusual warning: They might cause weight loss. That side effect is one that many people – especially those with Type 2 diabetes, which is associated with obesity – may desperately want. So it's no surprise that some of the same drugs are being reformulated and renamed by manufacturers as a new obesity treatment. No longer limited to the crowded field of treatments for Type 2 diabetes, which affects about 10% of Americans, they join the far smaller number of drugs for obesity, which affects 42% of Americans and is ready to be mined for profit.
- **Politico: Schumer Says He Has Votes For Moving \$3.5 Trillion Package:** Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said Thursday that all 50 Democrats will vote to move forward on the party's \$3.5 trillion social spending proposal. Schumer's remarks come after the Senate took the first step to advance a \$550 billion bipartisan infrastructure framework Wednesday evening. The New York Democrat has long insisted that the Senate will pass both the bipartisan bill and a budget blueprint for the multitrillion-dollar legislative package before the chamber leaves for the August recess.
- **Democrats Push Bill on Federal Drug Pricing Negotiating:** Rep. Lloyd Doggett (D-Texas) and 55 Democrats reintroduced a bill to empower the government to negotiate with drugmakers and punish pharmaceutical companies that don't lower their prices by issuing competitive licenses to their competitors. Doggett's bill is a marker signaling that progressives

in Congress are pushing to broaden the party's approach to lowering drug prices with tough penalties for drugmakers.

- Doggett has been a critic of how party leaders shaped their drug price negotiation bill (H.R. 3), which is limited to target fewer medicines than Doggett's bill and levies taxes on companies that won't lower their price tags. "Instead of yielding to Big Pharma by greatly weakening the already modest HR 3, now is the time to strengthen it," Doggett wrote in a statement yesterday. "Unlike HR 3, this bill unequivocally repeals the Republican-imposed prohibition on government price negotiation," he said.
- **Drug Bills Take Narrow Road to Rein In Patent Deals:** Major pharmaceutical corporations may face a tougher time keeping lower-cost versions of their drugs off the market as lawmakers consider a series of bipartisan legislation aimed at cutting down barriers to competition. The Senate Judiciary Committee yesterday advanced four bills that would rein in drugmakers' practices like dealmaking to delay generic market entry and "product hopping" – switching expiring patents to a newer version of a drug.
- **Modern Healthcare: CMS Announces Medicare Pay Hikes For Providers:** The latest Medicare payment rules for inpatient rehabilitation, inpatient psychiatric, hospices and skilled nursing facilities are out, and there's good news for those healthcare providers. Under a final rule CMS published Thursday, inpatient rehab facilities will get a 1.9% pay bump in 2022, raising their reimbursements by \$130 million. Inpatient psychiatric facilities will get a 2% hike, an increase of \$80 million. Hospices also will get paid 2% more, which amounts to an additional \$480 million. Skilled nursing facilities will get a rate increase just over 1%, or \$410 million.
- **Modern Healthcare: Insurers Oppose Longer Marketplace Open Enrollment Period:** Health insurance companies are pushing back against President Joe Biden's plan to lengthen the annual open enrollment period on the exchanges, according to comments the trade group AHIP made on a proposed regulation. CMS published a draft rule last month that would give consumers 30 extra days to sign up and establish monthly special enrollment periods for low-income people to enroll in subsidized low-cost or no-cost health plans. Comments on the regulation closed Wednesday.
- **Bloomberg Government: Grassley Wants DOJ Probe of Public Nursing Home Deaths:** Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) asked the Justice Department to reconsider its decision not to pursue a civil rights investigation into government-run nursing homes in several states. "The Civil Rights Division seems more focused on opposing common-sense voter integrity provisions than protecting the elderly," Grassley said, calling out New York specifically after the DOJ announced last week that it won't investigate nursing home deaths there.