American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Tuesday, August 10, 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

- 3:45 p.m. - The president is scheduled to receive a briefing at the White House from Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator Deanne Criswell, Homeland Security Department personnel, and the Covid-19 response team on how the pandemic is affecting hurricane preparedness.

CONGRESS:

- The Senate plans to vote this morning on the bipartisan infrastructure package.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **CNBC: Democrats’ $3.5 Trillion Budget Plan Calls For Medicare Expansion**: Health insurance for America’s older population would be expanded under a $3.5 trillion budget plan released Monday by Senate Democrats. As part of the budget blueprint, Medicare — relied on by most Americans once they reach the eligibility age of 65 — would cover dental, vision and hearing. Additionally, the age when people can sign up for the insurance would also be lowered, although it’s uncertain whether it would be age 60 as President Joe Biden has said he supports.

- **Bloomberg Government: Tax Break on Union Dues Added**: Senate Democrats are forging ahead with budgetary plans to create tax incentives for union membership and penalties for employers that violate workers’ union rights, three sources involved in the process said. Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) unveiled instructions yesterday that the $3.5 trillion budget package would fund “pro-worker incentives” and “labor enforcement,” without providing details.

- **Fox News: Scientists Look To Blood Tests To Spot Dementia Risk Early On**: A recent study out of Mississippi indicated a blood test was useful in determining patients facing an increased risk in cognitive decline, decades ahead of symptom onset. Researchers have been looking to blood tests as an easier alternative to detect Alzheimer’s as opposed to pricey brain scans and spinal taps. The study from the University of Mississippi Medical Center comes after a blood test developed by C2N Diagnostics of St. Louis became the first to land on the market last December, and months prior, a team of researchers from Sweden made headlines when part of a three-cohort study across Colombia, Sweden and Arizona found signs of the cognitive disease 20 years before anticipated symptom onset, when using Eli Lilly's blood test.
**Bloomberg Government: Lawmakers Fight to Revive SALT Tax Break:** A major push by a group of U.S. lawmakers to secure an expansion of the federal deduction for state and local taxes -- which yesterday won inclusion in the critical budget plan -- owes much to a pair of onetime roommates in the nation’s capital. One, Rep. Tom Suozzi (D-N.Y.), has the nickname “Mr. SALT,” and the other, Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-N.J.), is co-chief of a sometime influential bipartisan House group known as the Problem Solvers. Together, they’ve helped to gather a caucus of 33 representatives battling to remove or raise the $10,000 cap on SALT deductions imposed in the 2017 Republican tax-cut package. Success at getting that included in final legislation this fall would offer relief to middle and higher-income residents in higher-tax states such as New York and New Jersey.

**Modern Healthcare: Short-Staffed Nursing Homes Linked To More Readmissions, GAO Reports:** Skilled-nursing facilities that employ fewer registered nurses send patients back to hospitals or emergency rooms more frequently, a new federal report found. Short-staffed nursing homes, as measured by RN hours per resident day, sent 24% of their patients back to the hospital within 30 days of being admitted to SNFs in 2018, according to a new Government Accountability Office (GAO) report. The readmission rate was 21% among nursing homes that employed more RNs, even after adjusting for differences in medical conditions. That difference translates to 2,265 more hospital readmissions at facilities with fewer nurses. That trend persisted through 2019. Readmissions declined when staffing levels increased.