

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Weekly Capitol Hill Update - Monday, August 14, 2017

Congressional Schedule

Senate

- Senate out until after August recess.

House

- House out until after August recess.

Legislative Updates

• **Week in Review:**

- *Bipartisan fever: Conservative and liberal experts offer Congress a plan to reform ACA.* "Nine prominent conservative, centrist and progressive health policy experts have called on Congress to take bipartisan steps forward on healthcare reform, proposing a framework to stabilize and reform the Affordable Care Act's insurance market. The experts' proposal included compromise on both sides. Conservatives in the group, who have strongly opposed the ACA, agreed to shore up pillars of the law. They backed funding the cost-sharing reduction payments to insurers that President Donald Trump is threatening to end; establishing reinsurance mechanisms to protect insurers that sign up sicker enrollees; strengthening enrollment education and outreach; and creating strong incentives for people to maintain continuous coverage."
  - To read more:  
<http://www.modernhealthcare.com/article/20170808/NEWS/170809905>
- *Trump administration shifts tone on Obamacare, signals openness to bipartisan 'fix'.* "The Trump administration, thwarted in several attempts to repeal the Affordable Care Act, notably shifted tone Wednesday, opening the door for a bipartisan plan to "fix" the law. The change came even as a fight escalated between President Trump and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) over who is to blame for the Republican Party's failure to repeal Obamacare. "Both folks in the House and the Senate, on both sides of the aisle frankly, have said that Obamacare doesn't work, and it needs to be either repealed or fixed," Health and Human

Services Secretary Tom Price said on the Fox News program "Fox & Friends." "So the onus is on Congress," he said."

- To read more: <http://www.latimes.com/politics/la-na-pol-obamacare-fix-20170809-story.html>
- **McConnell open to bipartisan deal on health insurance payments.** "Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) is signaling that he's open to a bipartisan deal on key payments to health insurance companies, but warning any agreement needs to include 'real reforms.' "If the Democrats are willing to support some real reforms, rather than just an insurance company bailout, I would be willing to take a look at it," McConnell told reporters in Kentucky ahead of the annual Fancy Farm Picnic over the weekend. He added that while there is "still a chance" the Senate will take back up its ObamaCare repeal and replace effort, Sens. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) and Patty Murray (D-Wash.) are also working on "some kind of bipartisan approach" to stabilize the individual insurance market."
  - To read more: <http://thehill.com/blogs/floor-action/senate/345585-mcconnell-open-to-bipartisan-deal-on-health-insurance-payments>

### Regulatory and Administration Updates

- **Generic Drugs in 2017: FDA on Track for Most Approvals Ever.** "A little more than 10 months into Fiscal Year 2017 and the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is on pace to break its record for abbreviated new drug application (ANDA) approvals from last year. According to the latest version of the activities report of the generic drug program, FDA has approved 633 generic drugs in FY 2017, which compares with a total of 651 approvals in FY 2016. Also a positive: complete responses for generic drugs are down significantly from last year, with 1,292 sent so far in FY 2017, which compares with 1,725 complete responses sent in FY 2016."
  - To read more: <http://raps.org/Regulatory-Focus/News/2017/08/08/28204/Generic-Drugs-in-2017-FDA-on-Track-for-Most-Approvals-Ever/>
- **Trump officials confront new ObamaCare reality.** "The Trump administration is now confronted with the challenge of deciding how to oversee ObamaCare, a law it fiercely opposes but that is still on the books. With the Senate's failure to repeal the healthcare law last month, the Trump administration now has pressing questions to answer about how it will manage a system that provides insurance to more than 10 million people. President Trump has threatened to cancel key ObamaCare payments to insurers as part of an effort to make the law "implode." But he is yet to follow through on that threat, leaving insurers in a state of uncertainty."
  - To read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/345962-trump-officials-confront-new-obamacare-reality>

### Articles of Interest

- ***With drug overdoses soaring, states limit the length of painkiller prescriptions.*** “States are enacting strict limits on the number of powerful prescription painkillers doctors can prescribe, a move that many believe will help fight the opioid crisis but has raised alarms among some physicians. At least 17 states have enacted rules to curb the number of painkillers doctors can prescribe. Some, including Arizona, Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Ohio, have passed laws limiting the duration of initial opioid prescriptions to five or seven days. Others are passing dosage limits. In Kentucky, a law went into effect last month capping opioid prescriptions for acute pain to three days.”

  - To read more: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/with-drug-overdoses-soaring-states-limit-the-length-of-painkiller-prescriptions/2017/08/09/4d5d7e0c-7d0f-11e7-83c7-5bd5460f0d7e\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.f4cecbd8ba8c](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/with-drug-overdoses-soaring-states-limit-the-length-of-painkiller-prescriptions/2017/08/09/4d5d7e0c-7d0f-11e7-83c7-5bd5460f0d7e_story.html?utm_term=.f4cecbd8ba8c)
  
- ***Insurers cite uncertainty in filing ObamaCare rate hikes.*** “Insurers’ requests for premium increases in 2018 varied widely amid uncertainty surrounding how the Trump administration will implement ObamaCare, a new analysis finds. The Kaiser Family Foundation analyzed initial premium requests from 21 major cities, and found the rate requests ran the gamut from a 5 percent decrease in Providence, R.I., to a 49 percent increase in Wilmington, Del. Some areas saw more modest increases or virtually no change. Premiums generally wind up being similar or equal to insurers’ initial requests, but this year is different. It’s quite possible the rates could change, the analysis noted, as insurers still lack certainty about whether the federal government will continue critical payments to insurance companies or enforce the penalty for going without health coverage.”

  - To read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/345954-insurers-cite-uncertainty-in-filing-obamacare-rate-hikes>
  
- ***Trump rejects call to declare opioid epidemic a national emergency.*** “The Trump administration is declining to declare the opioid epidemic a national emergency, despite a recommendation from the president’s opioid commission calling that its “first and most urgent recommendation.” Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price indicated on Tuesday that declaring a national emergency isn’t necessary because the administration is already empowered to help curb the epidemic. Price said other national emergencies for public health have been focused on a “time-limited problem, either an infectious disease or a specific threat to public health.” Though, Price didn’t completely rule it out in the future.”

  - To read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/345810-trump-rejects-call-to-declare-opioid-epidemic-a-national-emergency>