

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Tuesday, August 17, 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 has no public events scheduled.
- 1:30pm – Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan

CONGRESS:

- Out of Session

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Democrats Keep Up Pressure on Drug Pricing:** House Democrats are using Congress's shortened August break to build support for legislation to lower the price of drugs, both among voters and in their own ranks. Rep. Frank Pallone (D-N.J.), chair of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, told supporters in New Brunswick, N.J., the House will move quickly to take up a bill to allow the federal government to negotiate drug prices when members return next week. "The time to act is now," Pallone said.
 - The House is expected to vote on a \$3.5 trillion budget bill next week, slated to be the vehicle for Democrats' economic and health policy plan. Because Democrats are expected to get scant support from Republicans for that plan, they'll need to remain united to send it to the president. Democrats are publicly taking on the main criticism of their drug bill – that requiring drugmakers to lower the cost of medicines will stymie the creation of new pharmaceuticals.
 - "Out-of-control drug prices are just padding corporate profits instead of funding new cures," Rep. Susan Wild (D-Pa.), who holds a strongly contested district in eastern Pennsylvania, said during a virtual event hosted by Lower Drug Prices Now, a group that supports Democrats' drug pricing plan. Democrats are getting backing in this effort from a number of lobbying and advocacy groups, such as AARP.
 - Patients for Affordable Drugs Now announced yesterday it will spend at least \$1 million on ads in districts of 12 House Democrats, many facing tough re-election battles next year, thanking them for backing drug pricing legislation. The 12 include Cindy Axne (Iowa), Lauren Underwood (Ill.), Sharice Davids (Kansas), Jared Golden (Maine), Elissa Slotkin (Mich.), Chris Pappas (N.H.), Andy Kim (N.J.), and others.
- **Bloomberg Government: Medicare Holds Off on Hospital Disclosure Fines:** The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services is providing hospitals time to change to its price

transparency rule, so far refraining from penalizing providers despite recently proposing to increase sanctions for those that do not comply. Hospitals have been apprehensive since Trump's administration announced they would be required to disclose standard charges for items or medical services in a final rule published in November 2019.

- **KHN: 'Tainted' Blood: Covid Skeptics Request Blood Transfusions From Unvaccinated Donors:** The nation's roiling tensions over vaccination against covid-19 have spilled into an unexpected arena: lifesaving blood transfusions. With nearly 60% of the eligible U.S. population fully vaccinated, most of the nation's blood supply is now coming from donors who have been inoculated, experts said. That's led some patients who are skeptical of the shots to demand transfusions only from the unvaccinated, an option blood centers insist is neither medically sound nor operationally feasible.
- **Modern Healthcare: New Medicare Hospitals Get Paid 3 Times More For Capital Costs Than Older Facilities, Watchdog Finds:** Medicare pays new hospitals three times more for capital costs than it pays established hospitals, costing taxpayers an extra \$1.3 million per hospital each year, according to a report the HHS Office of Inspector General published Monday. Under the program's inpatient prospective payment system (IPPS) rule, CMS pays new hospitals for Medicare-related capital costs during their first two years in the program based on their expenses. All other hospitals must cover their capital costs with money from their inpatient payments, no matter their costs.