

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Friday, August 21, 2020

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

- 10:45am: President Trump departs White House for Ritz-Carlton in Pentagon City; delivers remarks to 2020 Council for National Policy meeting at 11am
- Returns to White House at 12:15pm
- Trump is scheduled to hold a funeral at White House for his brother Robert today

CONGRESS

- 9am: Senate Homeland Security Committee holds hearing examining finances, operations of U.S. Postal Service with Postmaster General Louis DeJoy
- 11am: House Rules Committee meets on H.R. 8015, legislation to give USPS a funding boost and bar operational changes
- Moderate swing-state Democrats in the House are increasing their pressure on Speaker Nancy Pelosi to restart stalled stimulus talks with Republicans

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: States Still Struggling to Use Virus Relief:** While Congress wrestles with another round of Covid-19 relief, states are still figuring out how they can spend the last pot of money they received months ago. States have allocated 75% of federal funding received through the CARES Act that was signed in March, according to a survey from the National Association of State Budget Officers. But based on their latest reports to Treasury, the average state has only spent just 18% of the money.
 - While states continue to parse out how they're allowed to use funding – and whether scheduling spending before the end of the year qualifies as using it – many could run out of time well before they run out of money.
- **NPR: CDC Could Soon Get Responsibility For Tracking COVID-19 Hospital Data Again:** [Dr. Deborah] Birx made the remarks Monday during a visit to the Arkansas Governor's Mansion, but she did not provide a time frame for the change. Having the CDC run data collection again "would help us tremendously in getting back on track with respect to reporting and understanding what's happening with this pandemic across the region, the state and the nation," said Dr. Vineet Chopra, chief of the division of hospital medicine at the University of Michigan and a member of a federal advisory committee on hospital infection prevention.
- **The Hill: Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Necessary To Maintain Nation's Health:** The \$600 weekly Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) has expired and is gone until Congress acts. Opponents of continuing the PUA cite a fictional entitlement myth, just like Reagan's welfare queen — namely that people will refuse to work, staying at home and living off government largesse if they make more on unemployment than they did working. The problem with this position, in addition to being false, is that PUA detractors view these payments through an exclusively economic lens. A public health lens shows how necessary these payments are.

- **The Hill: VA Problems Raise Worries About Mail Slowdown, Prescriptions:** Concern is growing among Democrats and advocacy groups that slowdowns in the mail could leave millions of people without access to needed medications. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), which fills about 80 percent of prescriptions by mail, has already reported problems, and has been forced to use alternative methods of shipping prescriptions in certain areas of the country. While only about 5 percent of all prescription drugs are delivered in the mail, pharmacies and pharmacy benefit managers are increasingly using the mail to fill prescriptions for the most expensive drugs.
- **AP: Pandemic Pushes Expansion Of 'Hospital-At-Home' Treatment:** As hospitals care for people with COVID-19 and try to keep others from catching the virus, more patients are opting to be treated where they feel safest: at home. Across the U.S., “hospital at home” programs are taking off amid the pandemic, thanks to communications technology, portable medical equipment and teams of doctors, nurses, X-ray techs and paramedics. That’s reducing strains on medical centers and easing patients’ fears.