American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Wednesday, August 25, 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 plans to meet with his security team at 10 a.m. to discuss Afghanistan.
- Biden, members of his Cabinet, and corporate chief executives will meet at 2 p.m. to discuss cybersecurity.
- The president will sign legislation, the Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers (PAWS) for Veterans Therapy Act (BGOV Bill Summary), at 4:30 p.m.
- At 5 p.m., Biden will sign the Harlem Hellfighters Congressional Gold Medal Act.

CONGRESS:

- Out of Session

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: House Adopts $3.5 Trillion Budget Blueprint:** The House adopted a $3.5 trillion budget resolution yesterday after a White House pressure campaign and assurances from Pelosi helped unite a divided caucus to push ahead on the core of Biden’s economic agenda. The 220-212 vote for now puts to rest an intra-party rift between liberals and centrists that loomed over Democrats’ budget framework and the Senate’s $550 billion bipartisan infrastructure deal.
  - Pelosi released a statement committing to passing the infrastructure legislation by Sept. 27 and vowed to ensure that any Biden agenda bill the House takes up has sufficient support to pass the Senate. The latter agreement was demanded by moderates—some from swing districts—who do not want to head into the 2022 midterm election year having to vote on a historically costly bill that has no chance of becoming law.
  - Biden praised the vote and credited Pelosi’s “masterful” leadership. “The House of Representatives is taking a significant step toward making a historic investment that is going to transform America—cut taxes for working families, and position the American economy for long term, long term growth,” Biden said yesterday.
  - The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee is currently expecting to mark up its portion of the budget resolution the week of Sept. 12, according to an aide.
Meanwhile, the House Ways and Means Committee will start marking up a package of health care and tax legislation the week of Sept. 6, Chair Richard Neal (D-Mass.) said yesterday.

**Modern Healthcare: Insurers To Get A Break On Price Transparency, Surprise Billing:** Health plans will have more time to get ready for several requirements under the insurer price transparency rule and the ban on surprise billing, according to federal guidance published last week. The Biden administration won't crack down on insurers for failing to publish machine-readable files of provider rates until July 1, even though the requirement takes effect at the start of next year. But that doesn't mean they're going away.

**AP: Earlier Diabetes Tests Recommended For Overweight US Adults:** The guidance from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, an advisory group to the U.S. government, was published online in the Journal of the American Medical Association. It updates the task force’s 2015 recommendations, and says even earlier screening should be considered for overweight or obese American Indians, Black people, Hispanics and other groups with disproportionately high diabetes rates. The American Diabetes Association says overweight or obese adults of any age should be screened. Screening means blood tests to measure sugar levels and sometimes involves drinking a sugary liquid first. The new guidance suggests that people whose tests are normal could be screened every three years.

**Bloomberg Government: Drug-Price Allies See Fight With Centrists:** Despite Pelosi’s victory, House Democrats who want to empower the government to negotiate lower prices from drugmakers are worried moderates in their party are now emboldened to blunt their ambitious drug-pricing agenda. Progressives worry the same 10 centrist Democrats who threatened to derail the procedural vote could again join together to block drug-pricing efforts, such as Medicare negotiating power, from the reconciliation package.

**Politico: NIH Director: Vaccine Approval For Kids Unlikely Before Late 2021:** One of the federal government’s top public health experts on Tuesday predicted it is unlikely children under the age of 12 will be eligible to receive the coronavirus vaccine before late 2021, contradicting the speedier timelines offered by other Biden administration officials. Vaccine makers Pfizer and Moderna are currently studying the shot’s safety and efficacy in younger children and infants, with Pfizer expected to deliver the results of its trials for 5-11-year-olds to the Food and Drug Administration sometime in September.

**Reuters: High Blood Pressure Driven By Obesity, Poverty - WHO Study:** Nearly 1.3 billion people globally suffer from hypertension, a silent killer often driven by obesity that increases the risk of heart disease, stroke and kidney disease, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Wednesday. Hypertension can be easily diagnosed by monitoring blood pressure, and treated with low-cost drugs, but half of affected people are unaware of their condition which is left untreated, the WHO and Imperial College London said in a joint study published in The Lancet.

**Modern Healthcare: Insurers Have Stopped Waiving Costs For Preventable COVID-19 Care:** Most private insurers are no longer waiving cost sharing for COVID-19 treatment due to the widespread availability of vaccines rendering the illness largely preventable. While federal law requires private insurance plans to cover COVID-19 testing and vaccinations, there are no national regulations regarding out-of-pocket costs for treatments.