

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Monday, August 3, 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

- 11:30am: President Trump meets with U.S. tech workers, signs an executive order on hiring American
- 12:30pm: Trump has lunch with VP Mike Pence
- U.S. measures against “a broad array” of Chinese-owned software deemed to pose national-security risks will be announced shortly, Sec. of State Michael Pompeo said on Sunday

CONGRESS

- The Senate meets at 3pm; considers nomination of Mark Menezes to be Deputy Secretary of Energy
 - The chamber returns after talks last week for a new stimulus package yielded little progress; senators are set to begin an August break at the end of this week
- The House isn't scheduled to be in session this week, though members are subject to recall on 24 hours' notice if a coronavirus relief deal is reached and ready for a vote
 - House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and White House negotiators resume talks for a coronavirus relief plan

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: House Passes \$1.3 Trillion Spending Package:** The House on Friday passed a fiscal 2021 spending package (H.R. 7617) with \$1.3 trillion in discretionary funds by a 217-197 vote.
 - The measure includes funding for programs under Defense, Commerce-Justice-Science, Energy and Water, Financial Services, Labor-HHS-Education, and Transportation-HUD appropriations.
 - Also under the bill, private equity-owned health-care firms seeking Medicare reimbursements would be subject to greater transparency. The rule forces companies seeking short-term Medicare loans to disclose whether they are owned by private equity. Findings would be published in a quarterly report issued by HHS. It also recommends that the secretary of HHS forbid private equity-owned hospitals and health systems from furloughing employees or cutting benefits.
 - The House once again agreed to strike the federal restriction on creating a special “identifier” for Americans' health data. The provision, sponsored by Rep. Bill Foster (D-Ill.) was tucked into the spending package and would lift the ban on HHS from

creating a unique patient identifier, similar to a Social Security number, to help hospitals label health records. The ban has regularly been part of spending bills. But health technology firms have said lifting it would help doctors share records.

- **Bloomberg Government: Next Jobless Aid Bill Could Decide Path of Rebound:** A jobless aid deal could at best maintain U.S. household income at full force, or at worst knock out much of the expected rebound in third-quarter consumer spending. The likeliest outcome is a \$400-per-week extra federal unemployment benefit – a compromise between Democrat’s proposal of maintaining \$600 weekly aid and a Republican proposal of paying \$200 per week for two months before states draft ways to match 70% of workers’ prior earnings.
 - That would be enough to keep household income around pre-pandemic levels while also alleviating GOP concerns about the disincentive to work. An agreement on a \$400 add-on would also be consistent with a base case for annualized third-quarter GDP growth at 17%.
- **The Hill: White House Not Optimistic On Near-Term Stimulus Deal:** Trump administration officials sounded a pessimistic note Sunday on the chances of a coronavirus relief deal with congressional Democrats in the near future. White House chief of staff Mark Meadows expressed doubt there would be “a solution in the very near term” on any package. "Yesterday was a step in the right direction," Meadows said on CBS's "Face the Nation." "I'm not optimistic there will be a solution in the very near term."
- **Bloomberg Government: Emergency Preparation Ideas Get Approval:** The House Select Modernization Committee unanimously approved a series of recommendations Friday to allow legislative work to continue safely through the current pandemic and any future emergency. Most of the dozen proposals from the panel focused on technology, like making permanent the option to electronically submit committee reports or expanding the use of digital signatures for a majority of House business.
 - The panel also pitched a bipartisan, bicameral task force to identify the lessons from the public health crisis and recommend more improvements.
- **NPR: NIH Funds New Coronavirus Test Technologies To Make Testing Cheaper, Faster:** Americans continue to wait in long lines to get tested for the coronavirus. Many then face frustration and anxiety waiting days – sometimes even weeks – to get their results. Could technology finally solve the testing woes that have hobbled the nation's ability to fight the pandemic? The National Institutes of Health hopes so. On Friday, the NIH announced the first seven winners of a competition to produce next-generation coronavirus tests to help battle the spread of COVID-19. Together, they will receive \$248.7 million to further develop their tests and hopefully make them available by the fall.
- **Bloomberg Government: Health Providers for Poor Get More Time for Aid:** Cash-strapped Medicaid providers hart hit by the Covid-19 crisis will have an additional month to seek federal relief money, HHS said Friday. HHS in June allocated \$15 billion to health-care providers that primarily serve low-income and uninsured patients and that hadn’t yet received funding.

- **Bloomberg Government: Drug Reimbursement Rate Cuts Upheld:** Cuts to drug reimbursements given to hospitals serving low-income communities are valid under the Medicare law, the D.C. federal appeals court ruled Friday, overturning a lower court's decision and rejecting a lawsuit brought by the American Hospital Association and other hospital groups. HHS's decision to cut these hospitals' reimbursement rates by nearly 30% is a reasonable exercise of the agency's statutory authority, it ruled.