American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Tuesday, August 31, 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 and Vice President Kamala Harris will meet with their national security team at 10:30 a.m. on Afghanistan.

- Biden is scheduled to speak on Afghanistan from the White House at 1:30 p.m. Biden will also receive updates today on the effects of Hurricane Ida.

CONGRESS:

- Out of Session

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- European Society for Organ Transplantation: Organ transplants fell by a third worldwide during first wave of COVID-19 pandemic, new study presented at ESOT Congress 2021 shows: According to modelling calculations, the slowdown in transplants resulted in more than 48,000 years of patient life loss. The research leveraged data from 22 countries and revealed major variations in the response of transplant programmes to the COVID-19 pandemic, with transplant activity dropping by more than 90% in some countries. Kidney transplantation showed the largest reduction across nearly all countries during 2020 compared to 2019, with the study finding a decrease in living donor kidney (-40%) and liver (-33%) transplants. For deceased donor transplants, there was a reduction in kidney (-12%), liver (-9%), lung (-17%) and heart (-5%) transplants.

- Bloomberg Government: More Americans Covered by Health Insurance in 2020, CDC Says: Nearly 32 million people in the U.S. lacked health insurance in 2020, a modest drop from about 33 million the year before, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported today. The government data confirms earlier reports that losses in employer-sponsored insurance during the pandemic didn’t lead to higher uninsured rates because many people were able to shift to Medicaid or Affordable Care Act coverage.

- Bloomberg Government: House Republicans Oppose Debt Ceiling Increase: Half the House Republican Conference—106 members—signed a letter yesterday saying they would not “vote to increase the debt ceiling,” regardless of whether a debt limit measure is attached to a stopgap funding bill to avert a shutdown, Jack Fitzpatrick reports. The letter, led by Rep. Kevin Hern (R-Okla.), comes as Republicans in both chambers say Democrats should come up with the votes to raise or suspend the debt limit through the partisan budget reconciliation
process. Republicans oppose Democrats’ plans for a $3.5 trillion social spending and tax bill and say Democrats should carry the burden to address the debt limit. “Because Democrats are responsible for the spending, they need to take responsibility for increasing the debt ceiling,” the lawmakers wrote.

- Congress will need to raise or suspend the debt ceiling sometime this fall in order to avert a default on federal payments. Despite Republicans’ promise to oppose a debt limit increase, the letter also says the U.S. “should not default on our debts under any circumstances,” though it says Democrats have the ability to address the issue without Republican votes.

- **Bloomberg Government: New HHS Office Targets Climate, Health Equity**: The Health and Human Services Department announced a new office to help safeguard the health of people bearing the brunt of climate change, a day after Hurricane Ida hit the Gulf Coast. The first-of-its-kind “Office of Climate Change and Health Equity” will focus on protecting the health of those “experiencing a disproportionate share of climate impacts and health inequities,” Secretary Xavier Becerra said yesterday.

- **Bloomberg Government: ACA’s Author Returns to HHS**: Dara Corrigan, who oversaw the crafting of the regulations that overhauled the private insurance market, has joined the U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services as deputy administrator and head of the Center for Program Integrity, the agency told Bloomberg Law. Corrigan, who also served as associate commissioner for global regulatory policy at the FDA, will be tasked with protecting federal Medicare and Medicaid programs from fraud, waste, and abuse.