

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Thursday, August 5, 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 meet at the White House at 11:30 a.m. with Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander civil rights leaders.
- Biden will speak at 3 p.m. on steps the administration is taking to on clean cars and trucks production.
- The president at 4:30 p.m. will sign legislation that would award four congressional gold medals to the U.S. Capitol Police and others who served at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6.

CONGRESS:

- The Senate plans to continue consideration of amendments to the infrastructure bill.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Bloomberg Government: Pharma May Face Billions in Waste Fines:** Drug manufacturers Takeda Pharmaceutical and Roche could each be forced to repay the government \$100 million annually for wasted medicines under the bipartisan Senate infrastructure deal. The \$550 billion deal would require companies to refund Medicare when doctors throw away drugs, a move meant to press certain drugmakers to stop overpacking single-use containers. The funds would offset part of the bill's spending on roads and bridges.
 - Medicare paid \$752.9 million for drugs that were discarded in 2019, according to U.S. government data. More than a third, or \$286 million, of that spending came from just four drugs, and one – Takeda's Velcade – accounted for over \$114 million of that spending alone. The top five most-wasted drugs by cost in 2019 were Velcade, Roche's Herceptin, Amgen's Nplate, Bristol-Myers's Abraxane, and Roche's Rituxan. Velcade topped the list for all three years Medicare has collected this data.
- **Bloomberg Government: Democrats Eye Medicaid-Like Coverage in Budget Bill:** Thirty congressional Democrats called on leaders to include a Medicaid-like program in an upcoming budget reconciliation package carrying parts of Biden's social agenda. The program would "provide critical health care coverage" to the millions of Americans in GOP-led states that haven't expanded their state Medicaid programs. Their access to affordable insurance through Medicaid is hindered "because of where they live,"

- Bloomberg Government: Biden Stimulus Increase Cut Obamacare Plan Premiums by 40%:** Monthly premiums for health coverage through the Affordable Care Act federal marketplace fell an average of 40% because of a boost in subsidies from government stimulus funds, the Biden administration said. More than 1.5 million people have enrolled in health plans through the HealthCare.gov marketplace since the administration opened a special window Feb. 15. Another 2.5 million who already had coverage took advantage of expanded assistance created by the American Rescue Plan stimulus that President Joe Biden signed into law in March.
- KHN: 2+2=? Senate Uses Murky Math As It Shelves Drug Pricing Rule To Fund Infrastructure:** The Senate's release of its bipartisan infrastructure plan signals that lawmakers are poised to throw former President Donald Trump's belated bid to lower Medicare drug prices under the bus — not to mention trains, bridges, tunnels and broadband connections. That's because the massive spending bill is the first of two likely to at least delay the so-called Medicare rebate rule released at the end of the Trump administration, which has yet to take effect. Congress would use the projected costs of that rule to pay for more than half a trillion dollars in new infrastructure.
- Bloomberg Government: Report Floats Ways of Targeting Socioeconomic Health Factors:** A Medicare advocacy group and a social research organization unveiled recommendations on how the U.S. can better tackle social determinants of health, socioeconomic factors that can create disparities in health outcomes. The report from the Better Medicare Alliance and NORC at the University of Chicago cites the need for data-sharing among HHS and state Medicaid agencies, among other recommendations.