

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Thursday, September 26, 2019

(The following information comes from Bloomberg Government Website)

Schedules: White House and Congress

WHITE HOUSE

- 9:15am: President Trump participates in meet and greet with U.S. Mission to UN in New York
- 10:40am: Trump delivers remarks at fundraising event at Cipriani
- 1:30pm: Trump arrives back at White House
- 11am: Acting Director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Matthew Albence holds press briefing

CONGRESS

- 9am: House Intelligence Committee hears from acting Director of National Intelligence Joseph Maguire on the Trump-Ukraine matter; 2154 Rayburn
- Senate meets at 10am; will begin consideration of the CR, H.R. 4378
 - Senate to hold two roll call votes at 1:30pm, on nomination of John Hyten to be vice chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and on Eugene Scalia to be secretary of Labor Dept
- House meets at 10am; set to consider H.Res. 591, relating to Trump's national emergency on the border
 - House to consider 11 other bills, some relating to Homeland Security and cybersecurity

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Grassley Statement on Drug Pricing:** Senate Finance Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) wavered yesterday on whether lawmakers would be able to get a drug bill past the finish line by the end of the year, even as he released the text of his own legislative offering to the negotiations.
 - Grassley said he's been talking to House Democrats about their drug bills "to see where the differences are and see if we can work out anything to hopefully get a bill to the president whenever we can."
- **Health Insurance Costs Surpass \$20,000:** The cost of family health coverage in the U.S. now tops \$20,000, an annual survey of employers found, a record high that has pushed an increasing number of American workers into plans that cover less or cost more, or force them out of the insurance market entirely. "It's as much as buying a basic economy car," said Drew Altman, chief executive of the Kaiser Family Foundation, "but buying it every year." The nonprofit health research group conducts the yearly survey of coverage

that people get through work, the main source of insurance in the U.S. for people under age 65.

- **Court Orders New Look at Liver Donations:** A federal appeals court ordered a U.S. district judge to take a new look at whether to temporarily block the Trump administration's new policy for distributing donated livers to patients waiting for transplants. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit said yesterday the district court must go back and look at whether the HHS secretary legally had to refer the new policy to the Advisory Committee on Organ Transplantation and post it for public comment in the Federal Register before implementing it.
 - The new policy is currently on hold. Judge Amy Totenberg, on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia, ordered the administration on May 15 to cease and desist implementation of the policy while the Eleventh Circuit considers whether the policy should go forward. But the appeals court kicked that decision back to her.
- **Spy Chief to Face Democrats:** The nation's spy chief who delayed giving Congress a whistleblower complaint about Trump will face tough questions from House Democrats today, an early glimpse of their newly intensified impeachment focus.
 - Acting Director of National Intelligence Joseph Maguire will testify before the House Intelligence Committee about the complaint, which details Trump's request that the president of Ukraine investigate former Vice President Joe Biden and his son Hunter. Maguire will also appear behind closed doors with the Senate Intelligence Committee.
 - Maguire headed off a confrontation over whether Congress would see the complaint after the administration agreed to give it to the intelligence panels, but Democrats want to know -- among other things -- why he withheld it in the first place, and whether he was responding to political pressure from Trump.
 - The administration turned the whistleblower complaint over to select lawmakers yesterday, following the release of a White House memo of Trump's call with Zelenskyy. Democrats say the rough transcript of the conversation shows Trump brazenly pressuring a foreign power to undermine a political rival, while Republicans largely gave Trump a pass since there was no explicit quid pro quo.
- **History Says Impeachment Won't Backfire:** Citing their experience in the 1990s, Republicans warned Democrats this week that an impeachment inquiry into Trump would backfire politically. History, however, doesn't back up that assertion. Only three U.S. presidents have ever faced a serious threat of removal by Congress - Andrew Johnson, Richard Nixon and Bill Clinton -- and in each case the party that initiated the inquiry ended up benefiting in future elections.
 - "The idea that Democrats are going to have a political loss from this - maybe they will," said Elizabeth Holtzman, a member of the House Judiciary Committee during the Watergate scandal, which led to Nixon's resignation. "But the Nixon impeachment doesn't show that. It shows an amazing victory."

- **Republicans Chide Trump But Stick With Him:** Senate Republicans showed discomfort with Trump’s conversation with Zelenskiy, calling it inappropriate but unworthy of his removal from office. Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio), who leads the Senate Ukraine caucus, said it would have been better if Trump hadn’t mentioned Biden’s name, but “the rush to judgment by the other body is totally unwarranted.” Sen. Pat Toomey (R-Pa.) called the phone conversation “inappropriate,” but ultimately gave Trump a pass because the rough transcript “reveals no quid pro quo.” Both Sens. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) and Susan Collins (R-Maine) said that the transcript raises more questions.

 - Meanwhile, Trump’s campaign and the Republican National Committee raised \$5 million in the 24 hours after Pelosi announced she was opening a formal impeachment inquiry. “Huge groundswell of support,” campaign manager Brad Parscale tweeted in announcing the haul, which he said included donors from all 50 states. The total is far short of the \$24.8 million Trump raised in less than 24 hours when he officially relaunched his re-election bid.

- **Pot Bill to Ease Bankers’ Fears Passes:** The House passed legislation designed to let banks do business with cannabis companies in states that allow marijuana sales, a step that some supporters see as helping to pave the way to nationwide legalization. The Secure and Fair Enforcement Banking Act, which passed on a 321-103 vote yesterday, would protect lenders from federal penalties for doing business with firms in the burgeoning industry. The bill won bipartisan support in the House amid calls to help cannabis companies move away from being all-cash operations.

- **Border Oversight Bill Passes:** House lawmakers concerned about the oversight of migrant care and the treatment of citizens living near the border passed a bill yesterday to implement more oversight at the Homeland Security Department. The newest version of the measure by Rep. Veronica Escobar (D-Texas) would establish an independent ombudsman to oversee the training of and complaints about U.S. Customs and Border Protection and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement employees and take steps toward the use of body cameras. Trump “strongly opposes passage” of the bill, according to a statement from the White House.

 - In July, government watchdogs began investigating allegations of immigration agents posting lewd content on social media and abusing migrants, including at least one allegation of sexual assault.

- **Democrats Renew Push for Worker Misclassification Bill:** House Democrats later this year will re-introduce a bill that would penalize companies that wrongly classify their workers as independent contractors rather than employees. The measure, the Payroll Fraud Prevention Act, was most recently introduced last year by Rep. Mark Takano (D-Calif.). Democrats plan to roll it out before the end of the year, according to a House Education and Labor Committee aide. The core provisions of the bill will remain the same, but it is unclear who will be the legislation’s lead sponsor.

- **Labor Law Overhaul Proposal Approved:** Legislation that would make sweeping changes to federal labor law advanced out of a House committee yesterday to move closer to a floor vote likely before the end of the year. The House Education and Labor Committee approved the Protecting the Right to Organize Act in a 26 to 21 vote. Chairman Bobby Scott (D-Va.) said the “comprehensive” legislation would add strength to the existing “toothless” federal labor laws. “At its heart, the legislation before us today is about restoring workers’ right to organize and restoring balance to the economy,” he said.
- **Warren Highlights Electability:** Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) yesterday used her first rally as a front-runner in the Democratic presidential race to assure a crowd in a small New Hampshire town that her brand of progressive politics made her the most viable candidate. “There’s a whole bunch of core issues, like raising the minimum wage, and giving unions more power, and more regulations over financial institutions, and canceling student loan debt, and a wealth tax, that the majority of Americans — not just the majority of Democrats, the majority of Americans — are on board,” Warren said in Keene.

 - Polls this week showed her leading in the Granite State as well as Iowa and California, and one survey found her narrowly displacing Joe Biden at the head of the Democratic pack nationally.
- **Signal Loses Key Lobbyists:** Signal Group lobbyists with blue chip clients such as Microsoft and Facebook are leaving the company to strike out on their own. The new firm — founded by Rob Chamberlin, Sam Whitehorn and Jeff Markey — is called Elevate Government Affairs and launches Oct. 1, the three told Bloomberg Government.

 - The trio is registered to lobby for more than two dozen clients, including Charter Communications Inc., General Electric, and a number of municipalities, according to disclosure forms. For clients such as Microsoft, Facebook, FedEx, Honeywell International, and American Airlines, disclosures show that those going to the new firm are the only ones at Signal currently lobbying for those accounts.
- **Barr Sought DOJ Facebook Antitrust Probe:** The Justice Department intends to investigate Facebook after prodding from Attorney General William Barr, according to a person familiar with the matter, even though the Federal Trade Commission already has an inquiry underway. The social-media giant now faces parallel probes by two federal agencies over whether it has harmed competition in violation of antitrust laws. The Justice Department’s case will focus on conduct that’s separate from what the FTC is examining, said the person. The two federal inquiries are in addition to several investigations by state attorneys general and the House Judiciary Committee.
- **Trump Targets California Over Pollution:** The Environmental Protection Agency is set to demand California to do a better job keeping human waste and other pollution tied to the state’s homeless residents from fouling area waterways, the latest front in a Trump

administration fight with the nation's most populous state. The EPA today will ask California to outline its plans for tackling the problem, roughly one week after Trump complained about it following a visit to the state, according to two people familiar with the matter who asked not to be named before a formal announcement.

- **Court Won't Revisit Federal Workforce Lawsuit:** The Trump administration is free to implement three executive orders affecting the federal workforce, after an appeals court yesterday declined to reconsider an earlier decision reviving the orders. The decision means the full U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit won't take a second look at a July 16 ruling from a three-judge panel that overturned a lower court judge's decision setting aside large portions of the orders.
- **Trump, Abe Ink Trade Deal:** Trump and his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe touted a limited trade agreement yesterday, as the U.S. withdrew the threat of imposing auto tariffs on the Asian nation for now. Trump and Abe signed the "first stage" of an initial pact after meeting at the United Nations General Assembly in New York. In an emailed statement, the U.S. Trade Representative's office described the agreement as covering "early achievements." Trump told reporters that he expects "in the fairly near future" that the U.S. will have "final comprehensive deals signed with Japan."