

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Friday, September 27, 2019

(The following information comes from Bloomberg Government Website)

Schedules: White House and Congress

WHITE HOUSE

- Noon: President Trump participates in a High Holy Days call with Jewish Faith Leaders
- 3:30pm: Trump receives intelligence briefing
- 6:30pm: Trump delivers remarks at Hispanic Heritage Month Reception
- Vice President Mike Pence in Indianapolis; tours NeuroDiagnostic Institute and Advanced Treatment Center at 3pm and participates in roundtable at 3:30pm

CONGRESS

- Senate Appropriations Chairman Richard Shelby said he would meet with President Trump on fiscal 2020 spending bills today
- House meets at 9am; set to consider S.J. Res. 54, relating to President Trump's national emergency on the border
- 9:30am: House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, House Democrats speak to urge Senate action on H.R. 1, elections and ethics overhaul package that White House opposes
- Senate returns Oct. 15
- House Intelligence Cmte Chairman Adam Schiff asked Attorney General William Barr to turn over any Justice Department legal opinion on a contentious whistleblower complaint by today

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Republicans' Drug Price Platform:** Republicans are scrambling to find common ground on bringing down drug prices as Democrats move quickly to pass a Medicare negotiation bill in the House. House GOP leaders complain that efforts to redesign Medicare to reduce seniors' prescription drug bills and to spur the creation of low-cost generic drugs have taken a back seat to legislation, backed by Pelosi, that would empower the government to negotiate lower prices with drugmakers. Conservatives are left waiting for the White House to signal where Trump stands on the issue. As a result, Republicans have largely resorted to opposing the negotiation bill, likening it to the same kind of "socialism" as Medicare for All and other policies unpopular with GOP voters.
- **Data Infrastructure:** Sens. Tim Kaine (D-Va.) and Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) yesterday urged Senate appropriators in a letter to add \$100 million in investments to their final fiscal 2020 appropriations bill to "boost public health data infrastructure,"

according to a statement. Their request comes as “the nation’s public health system grapples with the ongoing outbreak of vaping-related illnesses that has killed twelve Americans and sickened more than 800.”

- **NIH Invests \$1B in Opioids Research:** Opioid addiction and pain management research are getting \$945 million from the Trump administration, nearly double last year’s investment. The National Institutes of Health announced it’s awarded the funds to 375 studies in 41 states through its Helping to End Addiction Long-term Initiative. The initiative aims to respond to the opioid crisis linked to more than 130 overdose deaths per day while coming up with better solutions for the 50 million Americans suffering from chronic pain. This year’s investment is twice the amount announced last year for the HEAL initiative, which was \$500 million.
- **Senate Passes Stopgap to November:** Senators voted yesterday to avert a federal government shutdown and delay difficult spending decisions until Nov. 21, but negotiators may struggle to reach a full fiscal 2020 funding agreement by then. Senators voted 82-15 to clear a House-passed continuing resolution (H.R. 4378) that would finance the government at fiscal 2019 levels through Nov. 21. It now heads to Trump, who plans to sign it, a senior White House official said
- **McConnell Attempts to Shield GOP:** Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) has tried to insulate Republicans in case more damaging information comes out about Trump and swings public opinion, even as he lashes out at Democrats for pursuing the impeachment inquiry. McConnell has accused Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) of caving to the Democratic “far left” in pursuing “a never-ending impeachment parade in search of a rationale.”
 - Still, he has yet to offer a vigorous public defense of Trump and his interactions with the Ukrainian president, which are at the center of the latest controversy. And he allowed passage of a resolution pushed by Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) that urged the White House to let lawmakers see the whistleblower’s complaint.
 - Several Republican senators are following McConnell’s lead, offering circumspect reactions to the release of a White House memo of Trump’s call and the whistleblower complaint that flagged it as potentially criminal. Yesterday, an increasingly common response from GOP senators was that they’re withholding judgment because they could be called upon to act as jurors if Trump is impeached in the House.
- **Almost Half of Americans Back House Inquiry:** Almost half of Americans say they approve of Pelosi’s decision to hold a formal impeachment inquiry, a new poll shows. The NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll released yesterday shows 49% of the adults surveyed support the probe, while 46% oppose it.
- **Democrat Predicts 2019 USMCA Vote:** The House impeachment inquiry will not derail a House vote on the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement this year, said Rep. Henry Cuellar (D-Texas). House Democratic leadership and the administration agrees that the trade

agreement and the impeachment inquiry should be kept separate, Cuellar said. "We can walk and chew gum at the same time," he told an American Security Project event yesterday. He speculated that a vote on the trade accord could come as early as November.

- **Trump, Thunberg Dominate Nobel Talk:** In a year when Trump and climate activist Greta Thunberg stand as the most talked about nominees for the Nobel Peace Prize, a more low-key candidate such as a trio of youth peace activists could very well walk off with the world's most coveted prize. Hajer Sharief, Ilwad Elman and Nathan Law Kwun-chung top the shortlist for potential winners of this year's Nobel Peace prize, the Peace Research Institute Oslo said in annual predictions. Reporters Without Borders and the Control Arms Coalition are also among potential winners, according to PRIO Director Henrik Urdal.
- **Trump to Nominate Acting FEMA Head Permanently:** Trump yesterday announced his intent to nominate Peter Gaynor to be administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, according to a White House statement. Gaynor has served as acting administrator since March. Trump also announced the intent to nominate Leora Rosenberg Levy to be U.S. ambassador to Chile. Levy is a Republican National Committeewoman for Connecticut, and previously was finance chairwoman of the Connecticut Republican Party, the White House said.
- **Census Says U.S. Inequality Grew 'Significantly':** Income inequality in America widened "significantly" last year, according to a Census Bureau report published yesterday. A measure of inequality known as the Gini index rose to 0.485 from 0.482 in 2017, the survey of household finances found. The measure compares incomes at the top and bottom of the distribution, and a score of 0.0 is perfect equality. The 2018 reading is the first to incorporate the impact of Trump's end-2017 tax bill, which was reckoned by many economists to be skewed in favor of the wealthy.
- **USDA Relents on Moving Data Report Deadline:** Economic reports with set calendar dates and mandated releases will be issued on time after all, the Agriculture Department said late Thursday, after it pushed back the deadline for some Economic Research Service workers to relocate to Kansas City. "The Department has amended the report date to December 9th, 2019 for three ERS teams, which includes 9 ERS employees who have accepted relocation and 15 ERS employees who have declined relocation, who work on these time-bound products," the USDA said in an email.
- **Administration Sued for Pesticide Use in Wildlife Refuges:** Two conservation groups are suing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for reversing a prior ban on the use of certain insecticides and genetically modified crops in national wildlife refuges. The Center for Biological Diversity and the Center for Food Safety filed suit on Sept. 26 in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. The challenge targets a decision from 2018 by Fish and Wildlife and the Interior Department reversing a 2014 pledge to phase

out the planting of GMO seeds, many of which are coated with insecticides linked to declines in bird and bee populations.