

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Wednesday, September 29,
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 at noon will attend the memorial of former Indiana First Lady Susan Bayh at the Washington National Cathedral.

CONGRESS:

- The House plans to consider five measures under expedited procedure. The chamber could possibly consider separate measures providing government funding and in relation to the debt limit.
- Senators are scheduled to vote on two of Biden's nominations for the Interior and Homeland Security departments. The chamber could also vote on a measure providing government funding.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Modern Healthcare: Big Health Insurers Control Market In Nearly Three-Fourths Of The U.S., AMA Report Shows:** Almost three-fourths of U.S. metropolitan areas lacked a competitive health insurance market in 2020, with shrinking options among payers harming patients and providers, the American Medical Association concluded in a study published Tuesday. Seventy-three percent of 384 metropolitan statistical markets were highly concentrated in 2020, up from 71% in 2014, the physicians' society reported in its 20th annual study of health insurance markets. In many cases, competition declined in areas dominated by just a few health insurers. Fifty-four percent of markets that were designated as highly concentrated in 2014 became even less competitive by 2020, and another 26% markets also reached highly concentrated levels, the report says.
- **Bloomberg Government: Drug Bills Markup:** The House Judiciary Committee is scheduled to mark up 12 bills including:
 - H.R. 2883, to enable the Federal Trade Commission to deter filing of sham citizen petitions to cover an attempt to interfere with approval of a competing generic drug or biosimilar; and
 - H.R. 2891, to prohibit prescription drug companies from compensating other prescription drug companies to delay the entry of a generic drug, biosimilar biological product, or interchangeable biological product into the market.

- Bloomberg Government: Disparate Patient Care Found in Medicare Managed Care Plans:** Low-income Medicare beneficiaries and “dual eligibles,” who also qualify for Medicaid, appear to receive sub-optimal care through their private Medicare Advantage plans, a new government report has found. Dual eligibles, or DE, who have complex medical needs, and Medicare beneficiaries eligible for the program’s low-income subsidy (LIS) to help purchase prescription drugs “often received worse clinical care than” other beneficiaries, the report found. Additional research is needed to “understand the causes of this pattern,” the report added.
- Bloomberg Government: Democrats Get Creative to Solve Debt Limit:** A \$1 trillion coin, a “gazillion” dollar debt limit, and removing Congress from the equation are among Democrats’ proposed solutions to the debt ceiling standoff, in a wellspring of creativity inspired by Republicans’ insistence that Democrats increase the limit on their own. Democrats insist Republicans join them in a bipartisan vote to suspend the debt limit, but Republicans are pressing them to use the budget reconciliation process. With a shrinking window to raise or suspend the debt limit before the U.S. would default on its debt, far-fetched ideas appear to be more preferable to Democrats than raising the limit alone through reconciliation. Jack Fitzpatrick runs down the list of ideas from Democrats.
- Bloomberg Government: Moderates Pitch Income Limits on Medicare Benefits:** Centrist Democrats are weighing whether new Medicare benefits should go only to lower-income Americans as they look for ways to cut the cost of their party’s sweeping domestic spending bill. Manchin told reporters he wants to means-test “everything we can” to reduce the size of the once-\$3.5 trillion spending package being debated by congressional Democrats. Other centrists have said new Medicare benefits — vision, dental, and hearing coverage — specifically need to be limited by income. “We have to have means-testing to bring it in,” Rep. Henry Cuellar (D-Texas) said.
- Modern Healthcare: Healthcare Leaders: 'Government Ought To Get Out Of The Way':** Healthcare leaders are increasingly skeptical the government can do anything to solve their industry's pervasive cost and access problems, and it's fueling calls that they go it alone, according to those who spoke at a Modern Healthcare event Tuesday. "My belief is looking to the government to actually fix something as complex as this won't work," said Dan Liljenquist, chief strategy officer for Salt Lake City-based Intermountain Healthcare. "We (the audience made up of healthcare C-suite leaders) know healthcare. How do we organize for a different future?"
- Bloomberg Government: Federal Health Centers Get \$1 Billion for Construction:** Nearly 1,300 federally funded health centers will be able to advance construction and renovation projects with nearly \$1 billion in new funding from the Biden administration. The American Rescue Plan funds will be awarded to centers that help the medically underserved and other vulnerable populations that are disproportionately affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and other health conditions.