

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Monday, September 30, 2019

(The following information comes from Bloomberg Government Website)

Schedules: White House and Congress

WHITE HOUSE

- 10:35am: President Trump leaves for Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Va.
- 11am: Takes part in a ceremony to honor the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
- 12:15pm: Returns to White House
- 12:45pm: Lunch with Vice President Mike Pence
- 2pm: Trump participates in Labor secretary ceremonial swearing-in
- 4pm: Meets with the Secretary of State Michael Pompeo
- 3:30pm: Pence meets with the Jamaican prime minister

CONGRESS

- House, Senate in first week of a two-week recess
- House Intelligence Committee and two other panels have scheduled closed-door interviews this week with past and present administration officials as part of Trump impeachment inquiry
- Congress expects to hear “very soon” from the whistle-blower whose complaint spurred an impeachment inquiry, the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee Adam Schiff said

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **Medicare Executive Order:** President Donald Trump will travel to Florida Thursday to sign an executive order “protecting and improving” Medicare. The long term effects on Medicare from the order are unclear but Trump is planning to tout his health agenda at the event and contrast it with his Democratic rivals on the campaign trail. Trump was scheduled to sign the order in August but it was delayed by mass shootings. The order is expected to favor Medicare Advantage plans, but details haven’t been confirmed by the White House.
- **China’s Role as Global Drug Hub Stirs Fear:** Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-Calif.), chairwoman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee’s health panel, is planning to hold a hearing in about a month to explore national security risks posed by China’s dominance of the U.S. pharmaceutical supply chain, escalating concerns raised by the Pentagon.
 - Eshoo is warning fellow lawmakers that if Trump’s trade war were to intensify, China could throw the U.S. into chaos by cutting off the vast supply of important drug components made in the Asian nation. “This would be one hell of a card for them to play,” Eshoo said. “It would bring America to her knees.”

- About 80% of the active pharmaceutical ingredients, or API, used in drugs that end up in Americans' medicine cabinets come from manufacturers in China and India. Drugmakers have embraced those suppliers as a way to hold down costs. A Defense Health Agency official told a U.S.-China advisory panel this year that the risks from China's stranglehold on the business "cannot be overstated."
- **DOJ Targets \$1.5 Billion in Health-Care Fraud:** The Department of Justice has charged nearly 150 people in health-care fraud cases worth nearly \$1.5 billion in a sweeping series of busts on the Gulf Coast and in the Northeast. Forty-eight people in the Northeast were charged in cases involving more than \$800 million in fraud and the illegal distribution of more than 3.25 million doses of opioids, the DOJ said yesterday. House later, the department announced another \$770 million in penalties it's seeking to retrieve from other companies that allegedly committed health-care fraud spanning five states.
- **Trump Revs Up a Campaign Fueled by Grievances:** Trump solicited advice on heading off his impeachment from Republican lawmakers and confidants over the weekend, but made clear his main tactic will be publicly ratcheting up his grievances against opponents in the hope of exacting as much political damage as possible.
 - The approach was exemplified by this weekend's tweets, a video in which he attacked Democrats, and allies who defended the president's behavior while belittling the impeachment effort. Together, the efforts offered a preview of the approach the president plans to employ as the impeachment fight intensifies.
- **Senate Can't Sidestep Trial:** There's no way the Senate can avoid receiving articles of impeachment on Trump if the House votes in favor of formal charges, according to a Republican Senate leadership aide. Under U.S. law, the House's role is to consider articles of impeachment against an individual -- in this case, the president. If approved, the Senate then considers whether to remove that person from office.
 - The aide laid out guidance on what may happen in the Senate, saying the GOP-led body and its leader, Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), can't simply ignore the outcome in the House, where Democrats hold the majority, and take no action -- as some recent reports by the Washington Post and Politico have implied.
- **What to Watch This Week on Impeachment:** Schiff said yesterday in an interview on ABC's "This Week" that Congress expects to hear "very soon" from the whistleblower. The timing will depend on how quickly the security-clearance process for his or her lawyers can be completed. "We're moving forward with all speed," he added.
 - Members of the Intelligence Committee, and two other committees, have scheduled early and potentially pivotal closed-door interviews this week with past and present administration officials. Most other rank-and-file members will be away from Washington for a two-week district work period through Oct. 15.
 - Kurt Volker, Trump's special envoy to Ukraine who stepped down last week, is scheduled for a deposition on Thursday, according to Rep. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.),

the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Schiff, and Elijah Cummings (D-Md.), chairman of Oversight & Reform.

- On Friday, Michael Atkinson, the U.S. intelligence community's inspector general, is expected to give a closed-door briefing to the Intelligence Committee. Atkinson is the official who told the committee on Sept. 9 of the existence of a whistleblower complaint.
 - Depositions have also been scheduled this week for five State Department officials, including Marie Yovanovitch, the former ambassador to Ukraine, T. Ulrich Brechbuhl, a State Department counselor cited in the whistleblower complaint; George Kent, deputy assistant secretary; and Gordon Sondland, envoy to the European Union.
 - In addition, three House committees have given Secretary of State Michael Pompeo, in a subpoena, until Thursday to turn over documents they've sought since early this month.
- **Impeachment Process:** Pelosi on Saturday declined to estimate how long the process might take. "This is hard," she said at the Texas Tribune Festival in Austin. "We have to be somber, we have to be careful. We have to be fair in judging the material."
 - "We must consider the facts further to make a decision as to did this violate the Constitution," she added.
 - **Trump Voters Unmoved, Doubt About Biden:** Trump may have risked impeachment in an attempt to tar Joe Biden with scandal, but he appears to have accomplished two political goals -- sowing doubts about a leading rival while incurring little damage among his most ardent supporters. Interviews with voters across the country in recent days found few have changed their minds about the president as a result of the Trump-Ukraine scandal.
 - As with previous controversies, Trump's supporters said they were sure he had done nothing wrong, while his critics said they thought it was obvious that he had. It was Biden who may suffer the most, as even some who support the impeachment inquiry said they now had questions about what Biden's son, Hunter, did in Ukraine.
 - Polls show that views of Trump have long been hardened. His Gallup approval rating has stayed within an 11-point range, compared to the 30-point average difference between highs and lows for every other president since World War II during the same time in office. And an average of surveys taken after Pelosi's announcement last week of an inquiry show 46% of Americans support impeachment while 42% oppose it.
 - **Republicans Paint Impeachment as Election Ploy:** Republicans yesterday rolled out a new defense of Trump: Democrats want to tank the economy and impeach the president because they can't beat him in 2020. Rep. Steve Scalise (R-La.), the House Republican whip, suggested that House Democrats are misusing impeachment as a pretext for denying Trump a second term that they wouldn't be able to prevent at the ballot box.

And Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said economic indicators through August were headed in the right direction until Pelosi's announcement.

- **Biden Tries to Defend Electability:** Biden has framed his campaign around the pitch that he's the strongest Democrat to take on Trump. He's now facing his toughest test yet to prove it. Biden, who entered the 2020 Democratic primary race late as its instant front-runner, enters a critical and unpredictable phase. He must look for a way to stop rival Sen. Elizabeth Warren's (D-Mass.) surge, even as Trump and other Republicans try to paint him as corrupt, based on discredited claims about his involvement in stopping a probe into his son's work in Ukraine.
 - Allies say Biden's strategy is to fend off the allegations by repeatedly insisting there's nothing to them, and retraining the focus on the impeachment inquiry into Trump's behavior. The campaign even went so far Sunday as to write to television networks demanding they not interview Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani because they said he lies on air. The campaign also is trying to refocus on issues such as health care, but only by press release. Biden seems eager to talk about Ukraine in personal appearances before reporters, voters and donors.
- **Warren and South Carolina:** Warren on Saturday returned to South Carolina, where she faces an uphill battle to show she can win over a diverse Democratic electorate even as her support is rising in Iowa, New Hampshire and nationally. She stumped at Clinton College, a historically black college in Rock Hill, aiming to chip away at Biden's strength in the southern state, which holds its primary election on Feb. 29. Black voters overwhelmingly back Biden, who enjoys name recognition with a bloc that's key to winning the Democratic nomination, helped by his eight years as Barack Obama's vice president. But Biden's biggest weakness is among young black voters, and that may be Warren's best asset as she looks to broaden her appeal.
- **Warren Pitches 'Accountable Capitalism':** Warren asked union workers in Detroit yesterday to embrace her sweeping progressive policy proposals, laying out her vision for "accountable capitalism" that has helped her rise to the top of the polls. "I'm tired of playing defense against the big money, I'm tired of playing defense against giant corporations that just keep getting bigger and bigger and bigger," Warren said at a forum hosted by the United Food and Commercial Workers, America's largest private-sector union with 1.3 million members. "There's a whole lot more of us than there is of them, and in a democracy that's what ought to count."
- **Booker Could Drop White House Bid by Tuesday:** Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.) said he could end his presidential campaign by tomorrow unless he is able to reach his goal of \$1.7 million in donations within the next 36 hours. Speaking on CNN's "State of the Union" yesterday, he said that despite an "avalanche of support," his campaign needed "some more help" from contributors. His campaign website shows he's about \$150,000 short of the amount he targeted on Sept. 21 to have a viable path to victory.

- Although he has languished at 2% or 3% in most polls and is struggling in fund raising, Booker has qualified for the October debate of Democratic presidential candidates. In the CNN interview, Booker said he has also met the threshold of 165,000 unique donors required to participate in the November debate.

- **N.C. Voting Maps Challenged Again:** North Carolina lawmakers are facing another lawsuit over the choices they made when drawing district maps. The state Legislature's 2016 congressional map was intentionally and illegally drawn to maximize Republican advantage, and "may be the most extreme and brazen partisan gerrymander in American history," according to a lawsuit filed Friday. The challenge, filed in the North Carolina Superior Court for Wake County, is backed by the National Democratic Redistricting Committee, headed by Eric Holder, who was attorney general under President Barack Obama.

- **New Definitions For 'Healthy' and 'Natural':** The FDA will be proposing new definitions for "healthy" and "natural" claims on food labels soon, an agency official said Friday. The FDA is "close" to proposing a new definition for "healthy" and is "working diligently" on the claim "natural", Susan Mayne, director of the Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition at FDA, said in opening remarks at the agency's public meeting to discuss food standards of identity. For years, the FDA has been seeking public comment on an updated definition for the term "healthy", which was last defined by the agency in the 1990s.

- **Trump Family Tax Returns Are With Deutsche Bank:** Deutsche Bank said it has tax returns filed by two members of Trump's family but declined to give their names, injecting an extra note of intrigue into a week that didn't lack for it. The disclosure, made in a court filing in Manhattan on Friday, comes a month after a federal judge ordered Deutsche Bank and Capital One to say whether they had Trump's returns.