

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update - Tuesday, January 11, 2022

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:

- The president is scheduled to arrive in Atlanta at 12:45 p.m. Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris at 2:40 p.m. will visit the crypt of Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King.
- Biden and Harris will visit the Historic Ebenezer Baptist Church at 3 p.m.
- Shortly before 4 p.m., they're scheduled to deliver remarks at Morehouse College and Clark Atlanta University.
- Biden and Harris are scheduled arrive back in Washington before 8 p.m.

CONGRESS:

- The House starts at noon and plans to vote on a rule setting up consideration of two bills expanding eligibility for veterans' benefits.
- The Senate meets at 11 a.m. and plans to vote on nominees for posts at the Commerce Department and the Federal Railroad Administration.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **CBS News: Red Cross Declares First-Ever National Blood Crisis:** The nation's blood supply is dangerously low, prompting the Red Cross to announce a national blood crisis for the first time. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a decline in donor turnout, the cancellation of blood drives and staffing challenges, leading to the worst blood shortage in more than a decade, the Red Cross said. Last year, the Red Cross saw a 34% decline in new donors. "If the nation's blood supply does not stabilize soon, life-saving blood may not be available for some patients when it is needed," it warned in a joint statement with America's Blood Centers and the Association for the Advancement of Blood and Biotherapies.
- **Bloomberg Government: Biden's administration moved to require private insurance companies** and group health plans to cover the cost of at-home, rapid Covid-19 test kits beginning Jan. 15. The new policy will cover a certain number of tests each month, depending on the size of the covered family, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services said.
 - The move, previously announced in December, comes as the Biden administration wrestles with a historic rise in Covid-19 cases across the country, and is facing criticism for a nationwide shortage of at-home tests. The new coverage—and plans to ship 500 million at-home test kits any Americans who want them—is key to the

administration's effort to curtail the virus' spread. But by making the tests effectively free for consumers with private coverage, insurers fear the costs of the tests could skyrocket.

- **USA Today: COVID Staffing Shortages Reported At 24% Of US Hospitals:** Almost a quarter of U.S. hospitals are reporting "critical staffing shortages" as counties across the country set COVID-19 case records. About 24% of nearly 5,000 hospitals are experiencing the shortages — the most since the start of the pandemic — and another 100 anticipate shortages this week, according to the newest data released by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Meanwhile, medical centers nationwide could set a single-day record for in-patient care of coronavirus patients as soon as Tuesday. According to the Washington Post, U.S. hospitalizations totaled 141,385 on Monday, barely under a record set on Jan. 14, 2021.
- **Bloomberg Government: Manufacturers Fear Devices or Drug Re-Classification:** Patients could face disruptions in medical treatment if the FDA moves ahead with plans to regulate some products as devices instead of drugs, according to manufacturers who decry such change as onerous and time-consuming. The FDA is reviewing whether certain products long regulated as drugs—like contrast imaging agents patients take before MRI or CT scans to provide clearer images—must transition to device status. It was a win for manufacturers seeking device status for new products.
- **USA Today: Human Receives Gene-Edited Pig Heart Transplant In Medical Milestone:** A Maryland man has lived for three days with a pig heart beating inside his chest. The surgery, at the University of Maryland Medical Center, marks the first time a gene-edited pig has been used as an organ donor. Dave Bennett, 57, agreed to be the first to risk the experimental surgery, hoping it would give him a shot at making it home to his Maryland duplex and his beloved dog, Lucky. "This is nothing short of a miracle," his son David said Sunday, two days after his father's life-extending surgery. "That's what my dad needed, and that's what I feel like he got."
- **Modern Healthcare: J&J Partners With Microsoft To Build Out Digital Surgery Portfolio:** Johnson & Johnson Medical Devices will collaborate with the software company to advance its digital surgery platform and internet-connected medical devices. The deal establishes Microsoft as Johnson & Johnson's preferred cloud vendor for digital surgery tools, according to a news release. The companies plan to apply Microsoft's artificial intelligence, data analytics and "internet of things" capabilities to improve connectivity between Johnson & Johnson's surgical robotics, visualization and other digital tools. The companies plan to develop digital tools that streamline surgical workflow or support surgical decision-making.