

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Daily Capitol Hill Update – Friday, January 14, 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:

- Press Secretary Jen Psaki and FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell hold a press briefing at 11:45 a.m.
- Biden will speak at 12:30 p.m. at the White House about the administration's progress implementing the infrastructure law.
- At 6 p.m. the president will depart Washington for Wilmington, Del., arriving shortly before 7 p.m.

CONGRESS:

- Both chambers are out until Tuesday. The Senate canceled next week's planned recess to continue work on voting rights legislation.

Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News

- **The Hill: Biden Calls On Employers To Mandate Vaccines Despite Supreme Court Ruling:** President Biden on Thursday appealed to states and companies to require people to get vaccinated against the coronavirus despite the Supreme Court blocking his vaccine-or-test mandate for large employers. ... "As a result of the Court's decision, it is now up to States and individual employers to determine whether to make their workplaces as safe as possible for employees, and whether their businesses will be safe for consumers during this pandemic by requiring employees to take the simple and effective step of getting vaccinated," the president said in a statement.
- **Bloomberg Government: Meanwhile, health-care facilities must once again work toward complying with a Biden administration vaccine mandate,** attorneys who advise hospitals and other medical providers said in the wake of the Supreme Court's decision to allow that requirement to move forward.
 - Health-care providers should be "full speed ahead" in their efforts to comply with the requirement, said Frank Morris Jr., a member of Epstein Becker & Green.
 - But providers may have a short time frame to take action. The deadline for workers at facilities in states unaffected by the lower court injunctions to get their first dose of a Covid-19 vaccine is Jan. 27, according to the CMS. The agency has not said whether it will offer an alternative deadline for the states involved in the litigation that reached the high court.

- **CNN: Many US Hospitals Are Halting Non-Urgent Procedures As Covid-19 Hospitalizations Rise:** As Covid-19 hospitalizations reach new highs, more states and health care systems are cutting back services and relying on National Guard members to fill gaps in staffing. The surge from the Omicron variant, which was first detected in the US just over six weeks ago, has left frontline workers in the medical industry and others at higher risk for exposure. As health care employees need time off to isolate and recuperate, the need to treat those with Covid-19 remains. In Washington state, Gov. Jay Inslee said Thursday that hospitals will temporarily halt non-urgent procedures "so as much capacity and staff can be dedicated to emergent needs, the people who need this right now."
- **NBC News: 'Like A Slap In The Face': Nurses Told To Use Vacation And Sick Days To Stay Home If They Test Positive:** Early in the pandemic, nurses were celebrated as heroes, with nightly symphonies of clapping or banging pots and pans. Now, many are being asked to go into work despite positive Covid tests – or they say they are being told they must use their vacation and sick days to stay home when they contract the coronavirus. "You're talking about a group of people who sat at bedsides – not one a night, multiple, because we were consistently losing people. We were holding the iPads as people said their last goodbyes," said Ana Bergeron, a registered nurse who is the president of a local union affiliate. "I can't tell you how sick it makes me now being called a hero, because that's not how we're being treated by our employers."
- **Politico: Senate Panel Advances Biden's FDA Pick In 13-8 Vote:** The Senate HELP Committee voted 13-8 on Thursday to advance Robert Califf's nomination to head the Food and Drug Administration, putting the Biden administration one step closer to installing a permanent leader at an agency critical to the pandemic response. Two senators who caucus with Democrats – Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Maggie Hassan (D-N.H.) – opposed the nomination. Six Republicans – Bill Cassidy of Louisiana, Mike Braun of Indiana, Roger Marshall of Kansas, Tim Scott of South Carolina, Tommy Tuberville of Alabama and Jerry Moran of Kansas – joined them in opposition.
- **Modern Healthcare: MedPAC: Increase Hospital Pay, No Change For Physicians In 2023:** Medicare payment advisors unanimously approved a recommendation Thursday to update hospital payment by 2% for fiscal 2023, and to keep physician fee schedule payment stagnant next year. But members of the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission continued to voice concerns about the long-term viability of the current physician fee schedule model, which they say isn't keeping up with inflation during a particularly volatile time for healthcare providers.