

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Weekly Capitol Hill Update – Wednesday, January 17, 2018

Congressional Schedule

Senate

- Senate convenes at 10 am; to resume consideration of S. 139, the legislative vehicle that would reauthorize section 702 of *Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act* (FISA).

House

- House meets at 10 am; set to consider H.R. 3326, the World Bank Accountability Act.
- House Rules Committee meets at 3 pm to consider Senate amendment to H.R. 195, the continuing resolution that would extend government funding through Feb. 16.

Legislative Update

- **Week in Review**
 - *HHS nominee Azar signals new line of attack on drug prices.* “Alex Azar, Trump’s pick to lead the Health and Human Services Department, doubled down on his commitment to bringing down prescription drug prices Tuesday – and even added a new target for future policymaking: drug makers’ list prices.”
 - To read more: <https://www.statnews.com/2018/01/09/azar-drug-prices-hhs/>
 - *Lawmakers say they're close to deal on CHIP funding.* “Lawmakers in both parties say that a long-running disagreement over children’s health funding has almost been resolved and that funding could be passed as soon as next week. The reauthorization of the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) could be attached to a short-term government funding bill that must pass before Jan. 19, lawmakers say. Whether the reauthorization is ultimately tied to the bill, however, will depend on broader leadership negotiations.

Funding for the program, which covers 9 million children, has been stalled for months amid partisan fighting over how to pay for it.”

- To read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/368422-lawmakers-say-theyre-close-to-deal-on-chip-funding>
- **'Safety Net' Hospitals Face Federal Budget Cuts.** “A double whammy of federal budget cuts might force many hospitals, particularly those that serve poor or rural communities, to scale back services or even shut their doors. The \$3.6 billion in cuts this year – \$2 billion from a program that sends federal dollars to hospitals that serve a high percentage of Medicaid or uninsured patients, and \$1.6 billion from a drug discount program – will have the greatest effect on so-called safety net hospitals that provide medical care for all comers, no matter their ability to pay.”
 - To read more: <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2018/01/16/safety-net-hospitals-face-federal-budget-cuts>
- **Week Ahead**
 - **House Republicans coalesce behind plan to avert shutdown.** “House Republicans on Tuesday night appeared to coalesce around a short-term funding bill to avert a government shutdown Friday – even as conservatives threatened to oppose it and a bitter fight continued over the fate of more than 700,000 Dreamers. Speaker Paul Ryan unveiled a plan at a House GOP Conference meeting to fund the government through Feb. 16, and numerous rank-and-file members quickly endorsed it despite their frustration with another short-term patch. To further sweeten the pot, the Wisconsin Republican’s bill also includes a delay of several Obamacare taxes and a six-year extension of a popular health care program for children.”
 - To read more: <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/01/16/house-republicans-government-shutdown-343189>
 - **GOP chairman eyes floor action for CHIP next week.** “House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Greg Walden (R-Ore.) said (last) Thursday that he is aiming to bring a six-year reauthorization of the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to the floor next week. Speaking to reporters, Walden pointed to new Congressional Budget Office estimates as the catalyst that broke the logjam over funding for the program, which covers 9 million children.”
 - To read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/368488-gop-chairman-eyes-floor-action-for-chip-next-week>
 - **GOP leaders pitch children's health funding in plan to avert shutdown.** “House GOP leaders on Tuesday night pitched a new strategy to avert a

looming government shutdown that includes children's health funding and the delay of ObamaCare taxes. Lawmakers need to pass a short-term stopgap bill by midnight Friday, when money for the federal government runs out. The latest GOP plan would keep the government's lights on through Feb. 16, and be coupled with a six-year extension of funding for the popular Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)."

- To read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/369262-house-gop-leaders-propose-funding-bill-with-money-for-childrens-health>
- **Lawmakers weigh measure to fight high drug prices.** "Lawmakers are considering adding a measure aimed at fighting high drug prices to an upcoming spending deal, in what would be a rare defeat for the powerful pharmaceutical industry. The measure, known as the Creating and Restoring Equal Access to Equivalent Samples Act, is intended to prevent branded drug companies from using tactics to delay competition from cheaper generic drugs. It is co-sponsored by a set of unusual bedfellows in both parties. The bill therefore could be a rare instance in which Congress acts against high drug prices, something the public rates as a top priority in polls."
 - To read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/369253-lawmakers-weigh-measure-to-fight-high-drug-prices>

Regulatory and Administration Update

- **Trump paves the way for states to impose Medicaid work requirements.** "The Trump administration took a major step Thursday to let states establish the first-ever work requirements for Medicaid recipients. The policy guidance is the most concrete development yet toward achieving goal of tying Medicaid benefits to employment – a long-time conservative goal that has never been permitted since the health care entitlement program for the poor was created 52 years ago."
 - To read more: <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/01/11/trump-medicaid-work-requirements-280969>
- **CMS launches voluntary bundled payments model, first since spiking mandatory bundles.** "The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation Center has launched a new voluntary bundled payment model called Bundled Payments for Care Improvement Advanced -- which CMS Administrator Seema Verma said is the first Advanced APM. The current Bundled Payments for Care Improvement Initiative, or BPCI, is scheduled to end on Sept. 30. BPCI Advanced starts on Oct. 1 and runs through Dec. 31, 2023."
 - To read more: <http://www.healthcarefinancenews.com/news/cms-launches-voluntary-bundled-payments-model-first-spiking-mandatory-bundles>

- ***Trump's secret plan to scrap Obamacare.*** “Early last year, as an Obamacare repeal bill was flailing in the House, top Trump administration officials showed select House conservatives a secret road map of how they planned to gut the health care law using executive authority. The March 23 document, which had not been public until now, reveals that while the effort to scrap Obamacare often looked chaotic, top officials had actually developed an elaborate plan to undermine the law – regardless of whether Congress repealed it.”
 - To read more: <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/01/10/trump-obamacare-secret-plan-278145>

- ***MedPAC Backs Bids to Scrap MIPS Medicare Pay System Amid Dissent.*** “Members of an influential federal advisory panel sparred here today over a recommendation that would direct Medicare to scrap its fledgling Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) and instead implement a new approach for tying reimbursement to judgements about value of care. The Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) voted 14-to-2 in favor of telling Congress to do away with MIPS and moving to what the panel termed a voluntary value program. In this proposed arrangement, physicians could opt to join groups and then have their performance judged as part of this cohort. MedPAC staff for months have argued that MIPS will burden doctors with complex data-reporting requirements, yet much of the reported information ultimately will be unlikely to improve the quality of patient care.”
 - To read more: <https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/891240>

- ***FDA to release more clinical trial information for newly approved drugs.*** “The Food and Drug Administration is taking steps to make it easier for doctors, patients and researchers to get access to clinical trial data amassed during the process of approving new drugs, Commissioner Scott Gottlieb said Tuesday. Gottlieb announced the actions just before a speech on FDA transparency at a Washington forum. The meeting, attended by researchers and academics, focused on 18 recommendations for making the agency's decision-making less opaque. The suggestions were part of a report called Blueprint for Transparency. The FDA has long said it is sharply limited in what information it can release because it often is dealing with drug companies' proprietary material.”
 - To read more: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/to-your-health/wp/2018/01/16/fda-to-release-more-clinical-trial-information-for-newly-approved-drugs/?utm_term=.becd76fb5ec1

Articles of Interest

- ***Experts Call for Action to Address Physician Burnout in Nephrology.*** “Kidney specialists face increasing work demands, high rates of burnout, and declining

- interest in nephrology as a career. A group of articles publishing in an upcoming issue of the Clinical Journal of the American Society of Nephrology (CJASN) sheds light on how that these factors threaten to reduce job satisfaction and impair the delivery of high-quality care to patients with kidney diseases.”
- To read more: <http://www.newswise.com/articles/experts-call-for-action-to-address-physician-burnout-in-nephrology>
 - ***National Kidney Foundation Appoints Distinguished Nephrologist-Scientist as New President-Elect.*** “Holly Kramer, MD, MPH, of Loyola University Medical Center has been named President-Elect of the National Kidney Foundation, Inc. (NKF). Dr. Kramer, a distinguished clinical investigator, and Vice Chair of NKF’s Kidney Disease Outcomes Quality Initiative, will be assuming leadership in October from prominent Johns Hopkins nephrologist Michael J. Choi, MD, who has made professional and public education the theme of his term as NKF President.”
 - To read more: <https://www.kidney.org/news/national-kidney-foundation-appoints-distinguished-nephrologist-scientist-new-president-elect>
 - ***Organ Transplants Hit an All-Time High in 2017. But It's a Bittersweet Win.*** “Last year, organs were recovered from 10,281 deceased donors – more than a 3% increase from 2016 and a 27% increase over the last 10 years. Those organs contributed to the 34,768 transplants performed in 2017 using organs from both deceased and living donors – a new record for organ transplants in the United States. The reasons why are both hopeful and concerning.”
 - To read more: <http://time.com/5097377/record-breaking-organ-transplants-2017/>
 - ***CDC says, 'There's lots of flu in lots of places.' And it's not going away anytime soon.*** “A nasty flu season is in full swing across the United States, with a sharp increase in the number of older people and young children getting hospitalized, federal health officials said Friday. The latest weekly data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show the entire continental United States to be experiencing widespread flu at the moment, the first time that's happened in the 13 years of the current surveillance system.”
 - To read more: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/to-your-health/wp/2018/01/12/cdc-says-theres-lots-of-flu-in-lots-of-places-and-its-not-going-away-anytime-soon/?utm_term=.d42dd688a938
 - ***A severe flu season is stretching hospitals thin. That is a very bad omen.*** “A tsunami of sick people has swamped hospitals in many parts of the country in recent weeks as a severe flu season has taken hold. In Rhode Island, hospitals diverted ambulances for a period because they were overcome with patients. In San Diego, a hospital erected a tent outside its emergency room to manage an influx of people with flu symptoms. Wait times at scores of hospitals have gotten longer.”

- To read more: <https://www.statnews.com/2018/01/15/flu-hospital-pandemics/>
- ***Trump declared in 'excellent health' after first presidential physical exam.***

“President Trump's White House physician declared him in “excellent health” after the president received his first medical checkup at Walter Reed military hospital on Friday, undergoing a physical examination amid suggestions in a recent book and by his detractors that he's mentally unfit. Dr. Ronny Jackson, in a statement released by the White House, said the examination “went exceptionally well. The president is in excellent health and I look forward to briefing some of the details on Tuesday.”

 - To read more: <http://www.latimes.com/politics/la-na-pol-trump-health-exam-20180112-story.html>