

## American Nephrology Nurses Association

Weekly Capitol Hill Update – Tuesday, October 2, 2018

### Congressional Schedule

#### Senate

- Senate meets at 10am

#### House

- House in recess

### Legislative Update

- **Week in Review**

- *Trump signs spending plan, avoiding government shutdown.* “President Donald Trump signed an \$854 billion spending bill on Friday to keep the federal government open through Dec. 7, averting a government shutdown in the weeks leading up to November’s pivotal midterm elections. Trump signed the legislation to fund the military and several civilian agencies without journalists present as the fate of his Supreme Court nominee, Brett Kavanaugh, continued to hang in the balance. The House and Senate approved the spending plan earlier this week. Trump said in a statement the legislation would ‘rebuild our military, protect our communities, and deliver a better future for all Americans.’”
  - Read more: <https://www.apnews.com/9d68bea7c02b4dc79411be73268d5e97/Trump-signs-spending-plan,-avoiding-government-shutdown>
- *Lawmakers unveil massive bipartisan bill aimed at fighting opioid crisis.* “Bipartisan congressional leaders in both chambers on Tuesday night unveiled a massive bill aimed at fighting the epidemic of opioid abuse in the United States, capping months of work. Fighting the crisis has been an area of bipartisan cooperation this year amid many fierce partisan battles raging with more publicity. The 660-page bill takes a wide variety of actions aimed at fighting the crisis.”
  - Read more: <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/408441-lawmakers-unveil-massive-bipartisan-bill-aimed-at-fighting-opioid-crisis>

- *Collins' bill to ban pharmacy 'gag clauses' pass House and Senate.* "Bills sponsored by Maine Sen. Susan Collins that ban "gag clauses" prohibiting pharmacists from telling consumers about the lowest prescription drug prices passed the House on Tuesday – after previously gaining Senate approval – and now will go to President Trump to sign. Trump supports the measures and is expected to sign the bills, called the Patient Right to Know Drug Prices and the Know the Lowest Price Act. The bills passed the House by voice vote. The bills were bipartisan, and in addition to Collins were authored by Democratic Sens. Claire McCaskill of Missouri and Debbie Stabenow of Michigan, and Republican Sens. John Barrasso of Wyoming and Bill Cassidy of Louisiana."
  - Read more: <https://www.pressherald.com/2018/09/25/collins-bills-to-ban-pharmacy-gag-clauses-passes-house-and-senate/>
- *GOP lawmaker touts move to lift limits on telehealth for opioid treatment.* "Rep. Buddy Carter (R-Ga.) on Thursday touted legislation to use telehealth to prescribe drugs to treat opioid addiction, a move he said would make it easier to fight the epidemic. Carter's legislation, cosponsored by Democratic Rep. Cheri Bustos (Ill.) would lift limits on prescribing drugs that treat opioid addiction without first having an in-person doctor's visit. Instead, telehealth could be used to prescribe the medication from afar. The legislation, the Special Registration for Telemedicine Clarification Act, is included in an opioid package that Congress is expected to pass this week."
  - Read more: <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/408795-gop-lawmaker-touts-move-to-lift-limits-on-telehealth-for-opioid-treatment>
- **Week Ahead**
  - *House cancels October votes, heads home to campaign.* "House Republicans announced Friday they were canceling all votes for October and leaving for home, recessing with two weeks left on their October schedule to provide candidates with more time to campaign before the midterm elections. The announcement, widely expected and typical of the House in an election year, came from Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.). He said the House would reconvene again on Nov. 13."
    - Read more: <https://thehill.com/homenews/house/408971-house-cancels-october-votes-heads-home-to-campaign>
  - *McConnell: Senate will hold Kavanaugh vote 'this week.'* "Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) said the Senate will hold a vote on Brett Kavanaugh's Supreme Court nomination this week. McConnell's comments, made during a Senate floor speech, comes as the FBI has to wrap up its investigation into multiple sexual misconduct allegations against Kavanaugh by Friday. GOP senators and aides have been careful not to pin down a specific timeline on Kavanaugh's nomination, arguing that the FBI could wrap up its work before the Friday deadline."
    - Read more: <https://thehill.com/homenews/senate/409340-mcconnell-senate-will-hold-kavanaugh-vote-this-week>

## Regulatory and Administration Update

- **HHS announces \$2.6 million in prizes to redesign dialysis as part of KidneyX.** “The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the American Society of Nephrology (ASN) have committed \$2,265,000 in prize money for ‘KidneyX: Redesign Dialysis,’ a prize competition that challenges the public to develop better treatment options for patients with kidney failure. This prize competition is the first in a planned series of Kidney Innovation Accelerator (KidneyX) prize competitions designed to develop innovative solutions that can prevent, diagnose, and/or treat kidney diseases.”
  - Read more: <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2018/09/28/hhs-announces-26-million-prizes-redesign-dialysis-part-kidneyx.html>
- **Medicare eases up on readmissions penalties for hospitals serving the poor.** “At the direction of Congress, Medicare is easing up on its annual readmissions penalties for hundreds of hospitals serving large populations of low-income patients, records released last week show. Since 2012, Medicare has punished hospitals for having too many patients end up back in their care within a month. The government estimates the hospital industry will lose \$566 million in the latest round of penalties that will stretch over the next 12 months. The penalties are a signature part of the Affordable Care Act's effort to encourage better care. But starting next month, lawmakers mandated that Medicare take into account a long-standing complaint from safety-net hospitals. They have argued that their patients are more likely to suffer complications after leaving the hospital through no fault of the institutions, but rather because they cannot afford medications or don't have regular doctors to monitor their recoveries.”
  - Read more: <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2018/09/26/651521016/medicare-eases-up-on-readmissions-penalties-for-hospitals-serving-the-poor>
- **Trump administration proposes weakening rules governing organ transplant centers.** “The revised rules, proposed this week as part of the agency's efforts to reduce ‘burdensome’ federal regulations, would no longer penalize hospitals if too many of their patients die following transplants. St. Luke's in Houston recently lost its Medicare funding for heart transplants for that very reason. The proposal, now subject to public comment and revision before it is finalized, surprised many transplant physicians who have long called for relaxed federal oversight. They've argued that the rules requiring that hospitals meet certain survival thresholds for transplants discourage them from taking on risky patients or accepting less-than-perfect organs, lengthening the time patients spend on the waiting list.”
  - Read more: <https://www.propublica.org/article/trump-administration-proposes-weakening-rules-governing-organ-transplant-centers#150557>
- **Health advocates decry funding transfer over migrant children.** “Public health advocates are sounding the alarm over President Trump decision to divert nearly \$200 million from health programs to fund the detention of unaccompanied migrant children who crossed into the country illegally. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

on Wednesday notified Congress that it intends to transfer up to \$186 million from elsewhere in the agency to pay for housing a growing number of migrant children.”

- Read more: <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/407864-health-advocates-decry-funding-transfer-for-migrant-children>
- ***U.S. challenges world to intensify global fight against antibiotic resistance.*** “The United States announced today, during the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in New York, The AMR Challenge – the most ambitious global initiative to date to combat the growing threat of antibiotic resistance (AR or AMR). This unprecedented challenge, led by the U.S Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), charges pharmaceutical and health insurance companies, food animal producers and purchasers, medical professionals, government health officials, and other leaders from around the world to work together to address antibiotic resistance by: reducing antibiotics and resistance in the environment (e.g. in water and soil); improving antibiotic use, including ensuring people can access these medicines when they are needed; developing new vaccines, drugs, and diagnostic tests; improving infection prevention and control; and enhancing data sharing and data collection.”
  - Read more: <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2018/p0925-global-antibiotic-resistance.html>

#### Articles of Interest

- ***Online diabetes prevention programs are as effective as in-person programs for weight loss, study finds.*** “Researchers examined participation and weight loss results in an online diabetes prevention program; an in-person diabetes prevention program; and the Veterans Administration’s face-to-face standard-of-care weight management program, called MOVE! In the primary analysis, enrollees in the online diabetes prevention program saw a mean weight loss of 10.3 pounds at 6 months and 8.8 pounds at 12 months. In a secondary analysis of participants who completed one or more modules/sessions, mean weight loss for online participants was 10.6 pounds at six months and 9 pounds at one year. This was roughly comparable to the results of in-person participants, but significantly higher than it was for MOVE! participants in at least one meeting, who lost 1.1 pounds at six months and 10.6 pounds at one year. In addition, the researchers found that the online program had better participation than the in-person program, with 87 percent of online participants completing eight or more sessions, compared with 59 percent for the in-person program and 55 percent for MOVE! This study is one of the first to assess weight outcomes in an online diabetes prevention program in comparison to in-person delivery of such a program.”
  - Read more: <https://www.newswise.com/articles/online-diabetes-prevention-programs-are-as-effective-as-in-person-programs-for-weight-loss%2C-study-finds>
- ***Insulin prices could be much lower and drug makers would still make healthy profits.*** “As prices for diabetes treatments continue to roil consumers, a new study suggests that manufacturers could make both human and analog insulins at low costs and still pocket a profit. After analyzing expenses for ingredients, production, and delivery, among

other things, the researchers contend that the price for a year's supply of human insulin could be \$48 to \$71 a person and between \$78 and \$133 for analog insulins, which are genetically altered forms that are known as rapid or long-acting treatments. Examples of analog insulins include Humalog, Lantus, and Novolog. Meanwhile, the median prices paid by more than two dozen countries for human insulin were 1.2 to 1.8 times greater than estimated prices."

- Read more: <https://www.statnews.com/pharmalot/2018/09/25/insulin-prices-profits-diabetes/>
- ***Statin use in advanced CKD lowers death risk.*** "Statin use is associated with a decreased risk of death among patients with advanced chronic kidney disease (CKD), according to researchers. In a study of 10,204 patients with advanced CKD (all of whom had been prescribed erythropoiesis-stimulating agents for anemia), investigators found that statin users had a significant 41% reduction in death risk compared with a propensity score-matched group of non-users, Tao-Min Huang, MD, of National Taiwan University Hospital in Zhongzheng, Taipei, and colleagues reported in the *Journal of Clinical Medicine*. The reduction in death risk was due largely to a decrease in sepsis-related mortality. Statin use was associated with a significant 47% decreased risk of sepsis-related death."
  - Read more: <https://www.renalandurologynews.com/chronic-kidney-disease-ckd/statins-reduce-mortality-risk-in-patients-with-advanced-chronic-kidney-disease/article/801575/>
- ***The future: Experimental therapies for renal disease in diabetes.*** "Diabetic nephropathy is the commonest cause of end-stage renal disease and affects between 30 and 45% of patients with diabetes mellitus. There is no cure for diabetic nephropathy and the current management of this condition includes glycaemic control, blockade of the renin-angiotensin aldosterone system and lifestyle changes. However, many patients eventually progress to end-stage renal disease. The exact pathogenesis of diabetic nephropathy is still being researched, and recent advances have led to the development of several novel potential therapeutic targets. There are a number of different experimental therapies that are currently being assessed. Abnormal vascular remodelling, inflammation and oxidative stress seem to be the 3 main sources from which future new drugs for diabetic kidney disease will originate."
  - Read more: <https://www.karger.com/Article/FullText/492825>
- ***The waiting list for organ transplants is finally shrinking – for a grim reason.*** "While the number of opioid overdose deaths nationwide has doubled since 2008, the number of those victims who have become organ donors has quadrupled. Partially as a result of the newly available organs from overdose deaths, the list of people waiting for transplants – nearly 124,000 at its peak in 2014 – has begun to shrink for the first time, after 25 years of continuous growth."
  - Read more: <https://www.vox.com/2018/9/24/17880392/opioid-crisis-public-health-liver-transplant-organs>
- ***New kidney care companies intend to make money by keeping patients out of the dialysis chair.*** "San Francisco-based Cricket Health only has about a dozen employees.

But the tech-enabled kidney care provider has some big ambitions in the next year or so when it comes to disrupting the world of kidney care. Namely, they intend to show that their proprietary data analytics can identify high-risk patients to allow early intervention, improve outcomes, and lower the cost of the care that chronic kidney disease often requires.”

- Read more: <https://www.fiercehealthcare.com/hospitals-health-systems/more-companies-invest-kidney-care-space>
- ***America is on the verge of a nursing crisis.*** “Earlier this month, 7,000 nurses across five states voted by an ‘overwhelming majority’ to authorize a strike if ongoing contract negotiations don’t deliver results. As with the steelworkers, this doesn’t guarantee a work stoppage. But it does show the National Nurses Organizing Committee means business. Another group of nurses employed by the University of Michigan Health System is threatening to strike as well. The nurses’ complaints involves multiple items, like wages and security issues for nurses treating unstable patients. But arguably the biggest factor is nurse-to-patient ratios.”
  - Read more: <http://theweek.com/articles/797779/america-verge-nursing-crisis>
- ***CDC: 80K people in U.S. died from flu last year.*** “The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 80,000 people in the United States died of the flu and its complications last winter, the most in at least four decades, according to the Associated Press. The number of deaths last winter is higher than any flu season going back to 1976-1977, before which there is not easily available data, according to the AP.”
  - Read more: <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/408599-cdc-80000-people-died-from-flu-last-winter>
- ***AP Investigation: Drug prices going up despite Trump promise.*** “President Donald Trump made reducing drug prices a key promise during his election campaign, repeatedly accusing drugmakers of ‘getting away with murder.’ At the end of May, he promised that drug companies would be announcing ‘massive’ voluntary drug price cuts within two weeks. That hasn’t happened, and an Associated Press analysis of brand-name prescription drug prices shows it’s been business as usual for drugmakers, with far more price hikes than cuts. The number of increases slowed somewhat and were not quite as steep as in past years, the AP found. Over the first seven months of the year, there were 96 price hikes for every price cut, the AP found. Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar, the administration’s point person for efforts to lower drug prices, conceded in a recent AP interview that it will be a while before drug prices fall. He noted the complexity of the medicine market and its incentives for drugmakers to boost prices so they and middlemen make bigger profits.”
  - Read more: <https://apnews.com/b28338b7c91c4174ad5fad682138520d>
- ***The end of HIV transmission in the US: a once-unthinkable dream becomes an openly discussed goal.*** “A mere decade ago, 45,000 Americans a year were contracting HIV. Since the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention started collecting data on HIV-related deaths just over 30 years ago, more than half a million of those people have died from AIDS. And yet, today, the struggle against HIV may be undergoing a sea change. U.S. health officials and HIV experts are beginning to talk about a future in which

transmission in the United States could be halted. And that future, they say, could come not within a generation, but in the span of just a few years.”

- Read more: <https://www.statnews.com/2018/09/26/hiv-aids-end-of-transmission-goal/>