

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Weekly Capitol Hill Update - Monday, October 9, 2017

Congressional Schedule

Senate

- Senate returns Oct. 16

House

- House returns Tuesday; lawmakers are expected to take up an additional supplemental funding package for hurricane relief, House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy said last week.
- McCarthy says he also expects a motion to go to conference with the Senate on the annual defense authorization bill.

Legislative Update

- **Week in Review**

- *National Kidney Foundation Urges Support for Landmark Kidney Disease Legislation.* "October 2, 2017 – The National Kidney Foundation applauds the introduction of landmark legislation which will help doctors and patients detect and treat chronic kidney disease (CKD) earlier to achieve better patient outcomes. H.R. 3867 introduced late last week by Representatives Markwayne Mullin (R-OK), George Holding (R-NC), Linda Sanchez (D-CA), G.K. Butterfield (D-NC) seeks to establish a Medicare pilot program to help improve care, and outcomes, for patients with chronic kidney disease (CKD). The legislation seeks to demonstrate that early detection of CKD, combined with effective and coordinated care that engages patients in the decision-making process, can not only improve clinical results but also lower healthcare spending."
 - To read more: <https://www.kidney.org/news/national-kidney-foundation-urges-support-landmark-kidney-disease-legislation>
- *Senate leaves town with no Obamacare fix.* "The Senate left town on Thursday for more than a week without reaching a deal to stabilize Obamacare's marketplaces. Talks between Democrats and Republicans started up again in earnest late last month after the GOP's latest attempt at Obamacare repeal

collapsed. However, the Senate left town Thursday without finalizing any deal, although negotiators pledged to continue talks.”

- To read more: <http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/senate-leaves-town-with-no-obamacare-fix/article/2636687>

- ***Bill to Rescue Children’s Health Program Hits Snag in House.*** “Legislation to rescue the Children’s Health Insurance Program sailed through a Senate committee on Wednesday, but touched off a partisan conflict in the House, diminishing hopes that the popular program would be quickly refinanced. Funding for the program expired on Sunday, and state officials said they would soon start notifying families that children could lose coverage if Congress did not provide additional money. It was impossible to say when Congress might pass a bill and send it to President Trump.”

- To read more: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/04/us/politics/children-health-insurance-program-congress.html>

- ***Grassley Pressing to Include Drug Pricing Measures in CHIP Reauthorization.*** “Sen. Chuck Grassley, a senior member and former chairman of the powerful Senate Finance Committee, is pressing GOP leaders to tackle high drug prices in a critical bill to renew funding for the Children’s Health Insurance Program. Grassley (R-Iowa), who has tried for years to advance legislation targeting rising prescription drug costs to little avail, is pushing two bills as potential offsets for CHIP funding.”

- To read more: <https://morningconsult.com/2017/10/03/grassley-pressing-include-drug-pricing-measures-chip-reauthorization/>

- ***Senate confirms No. 2 spot at HHS, days after Price resigns.*** “The Senate confirmed Eric Hargan to fill the No. 2 position in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) just days after Tom Price resigned as HHS secretary. The 57-to-38 vote on Wednesday was largely along party lines. Seven Democrats and Sen. Angus King (I-Maine) supported the nomination.”

- To read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/353926-senate-confirms-no-2-spot-at-hhs-days-after-price-resigns>

- **Week Ahead**

- ***Congress tackles children’s healthcare, insurance stabilization.*** “Congress’ health care to-do list is fairly long. Efforts to craft a bipartisan insurance stabilization bill and reauthorize the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) are underway. But with senators in their home districts this week, it’s hard to see much movement on either one. (However, the House is in.) Sens. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) and Patty Murray (D-Wash.) are trying to find common ground to stabilize the ObamaCare exchanges after Senate Republicans failed to pass a bill to repeal and replace ObamaCare. Meanwhile, funding for CHIP and community health centers expired at the end of September — and neither has been reauthorized. States still have money to keep their children’s

health programs running until at least December, but advocates say the uncertainty isn't easy for states, as they've already crafted their budgets.

- To read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/354287-week-ahead-congress-tackles-childrens-healthcare-insurance-stabilization>

Regulatory and Administration Update

- ***As ACA enrollment nears, administration keeps cutting federal support of the law.*** “For months, officials in Republican-controlled Iowa had sought federal permission to revitalize their ailing health-insurance marketplace. Then President Trump read about the request in a newspaper story and called the federal director weighing the application. Trump’s message in late August was clear, according to individuals who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations: Tell Iowa no. Supporters of the Affordable Care Act see the president’s opposition even to changes sought by conservative states as part of a broader campaign by his administration to undermine the 2010 health-care law. In addition to trying to cut funding for the ACA, the Trump administration also is hampering state efforts to control premiums. In the case of Iowa, that involved a highly unusual intervention by the president himself.”
 - For more information: https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/as-aca-enrollment-nears-administration-keeps-cutting-federal-support-of-the-law/2017/10/05/cc5995a2-a50e-11e7-b14f-f41773cd5a14_story.html?utm_term=.6df53965d244
- ***HHS broadens support to shore up health care facilities impacted by Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico.*** “To further aid health care facilities in Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Maria, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has implemented a three-tiered strategy as part of the Trump Administration’s ongoing relief efforts. “The Surgeon General and I met today with Puerto Rico Health Secretary Dr. Rafael Rodríguez Mercado and Secretary of Housing Fernando Gil Enseñat to discuss current and long-term health concerns. Most medical facilities are functioning on generator power so there is an immediate need to shore up the medical infrastructure,” said HHS Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response Robert Kadlec, M.D. “We will be working together to ensure health and medical care for the people of Puerto Rico, and HHS will be there for as long as we are needed.”
 - To read more: <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2017/10/02/hhs-broadens-support-shore-health-care-facilities-impacted-hurricane-maria-puerto-rico.html>
- ***With HHS Secretary Tom Price deplaning, what happens to MACRA?*** “His plane scandal landed on a busy week in Washington. Price’s headlines overshadowed a very important week for health care and tax reform. Price also had little sway or influence on Capitol Hill, and was associated with one of Trump’s biggest failures – an inability to repeal Obamacare. And with that, the former orthopedic surgeon and Congressman was sent packing. Coincidentally, I happen to be writing this blog from the back of a small CRJ-900 plane while sitting next to an orthopedic surgeon. Ah, the irony.”
 - To read more: <https://www.nephrologynews.com/with-hhs-secretary-tom-price-deplaning-what-happens-to-macra/>

Articles of Interest

- ***Thousands with kidney disease at risk in Puerto Rico.*** “Thousands of people with kidney disease in Puerto Rico are at risk due to power outages in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. It’s one of the most pressing health issues facing residents of the U.S. territory dealing with scores of medical crises in the aftermath of a hurricane that has knocked out power. Hospitals running on generators are low on power, and conditions on the ground are ripe for the spread of disease.”
 - To read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/353174-thousands-with-kidney-disease-at-risk-in-puerto-rico>

- ***Dialysis clinics struggle to stay open in Puerto Rico.*** “Getting access to diesel fuel to run generators and potable water is adding to the struggles of hospitals and dialysis providers trying to provide care in devastated Puerto Rico. The island was hit by Hurricane Maria on Sept. 20. The Federal Emergency Management Agency says 51 of 69 hospitals are running in some capacity now, along with 46 of 48 dialysis centers, but the Kidney Community Emergency Response Coalition reports almost all are running on backup systems for power and water.”
 - To read more: <https://www.nephrologynews.com/dialysis-clinics-struggle-to-stay-open-in-puerto-rico/>

- ***With Affordable Care Act’s Future Cloudy, Costs for Many Seem Sure to Soar.*** “Health insurers are aggressively increasing prices next year for individual policies sold under the federal health care law, with some raising premiums by more than 50 percent. By approving such steep increases for 2018 in recent weeks, regulators in many states appeared to be coaxing companies to hang in there, despite turmoil in the market and continuing uncertainty in Congress about the future of the law, the Affordable Care Act.”
 - To read more: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/03/health/aca-insurance-rate-increases.html?_r=1

- ***Gov. Scott Declares State of Emergency to Help Hurricane Victims From Puerto Rico, Opens Disaster Relief Centers.*** “Gov. Rick Scott has declared a state of emergency for all 67 Florida counties in response to Hurricane Maria’s devastating impact on Puerto Rico. The declaration is intended to make available resources and assistance to help families who are fleeing the destruction that has occurred in their homeland and coming to Florida. “With families displaced by Hurricane Maria already present and still arriving in Florida, it is critical that our state is prepared to provide the resources they need upon entering our state,” said Scott. “Our state is an incredible melting pot, and the success and growth we’ve seen over the years is credited to the wonderful people that live in Florida. As Puerto Rico rebuilds, Florida remains committed to doing everything we can to help the families impacted by Hurricane Maria and aid in the recovery process.”
 - To read more: <http://thecapitolist.com/gov-scott-declares-state-of-emergency-to-help-hurricane-victims-from-puerto-rico-opens-disaster-relief-centers/>

- ***Are These Common Organ Donor Myths Stopping You From Saving a Life?*** “On October 4, New York-Presbyterian is celebrating Organ Donor Enrollment Day by launching a

new campaign to educate New Yorkers about the need for organ donations and encourage people across the state to become organ donors. The campaign comes at a time when New York ranks 50th out of 50 states with regard to the percentage of residents registered as organ donors. As the region's leader in performing the highest volume of solid organ transplant surgeries, NewYork-Presbyterian is taking this opportunity to dispel common myths that can sometimes prevent people from becoming organ donors."

- To read more: <http://www.newswise.com/articles/are-these-common-organ-donor-myths-stopping-you-from-saving-a-life>