

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Weekly Capitol Hill Update - Tuesday, February 26, 2019

Congressional Schedule

Senate

- Resumes consideration of Eric Miller to be a judge for the Ninth Circuit after agreeing Monday to limit debate on the nomination

House

- House meets at 10am; first votes expected 2:15pm-3:15pm; last votes 5:15pm-6:15pm
- House to consider two bills related to firearm purchases and background checks
 - H.R. 8, which would close the so-called gun-show loophole in federal gun background check laws, and H.R. 1112, which would close the so-called Charleston loophole in federal gun background check laws
 - White House has issued a veto threat on the measures
 - Former Arizona Democratic Rep. Gabby Giffords will be on Capitol Hill this morning to rally support for H.R. 8

Legislative Update

- **Week in Review**
 - *Bill would let patients buy cheaper insulin from other countries.* "A bill introduced by Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) on Wednesday would let patients import cheaper insulin from Canada and other countries. "Prices for insulin have gone through the roof and are hammering diabetes patients who cannot live without this life-saving medicine yet cannot afford to pay for it," Welch said in a statement."
 - Read more: <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/430784-bill-would-let-patients-buy-cheaper-insulin-from-other-countries>
 - *Powerful Senate committee launches bipartisan probe into insulin pricing.* "The heads of the influential Senate Finance Committee on Friday launched an

investigation into the high price of insulin, demanding answers from the three manufacturers that control most of the global market for the drug: Eli Lilly, Sanofi and Novo Nordisk.”

- Read more: <https://www.statnews.com/2019/02/22/powerful-senate-committee-launches-bipartisan-probe-into-insulin-pricing/>
- **High stakes as Trump, Dems open drug price talks.** “Democrats and the Trump administration are beginning to hold talks on lowering drug prices as they look for a rare area of common ground. Both President Trump and congressional Democrats say that lowering drug prices is a priority, providing a potential area for bipartisan action in a government that is otherwise bitterly divided after a months-long fight over border security.”
 - Read more: <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/430310-high-stakes-as-trump-dems-open-drug-price-talks>
- **Sherrod Brown pushes for Medicare buy-in proposal in place of 'Medicare for all'.** “Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) on Sunday called for expanding Medicare to people who are 50 years and older rather than pushing for “Medicare for all,” a popular option for many potential Democratic 2020 nominees. Brown, who is considering running for president and who has said Medicare for all isn't practical, said Sunday on CNN's "State of the Union" that he wants to “help people now.” His proposal would create a voluntary buy-in to Medicare for people who are 50 and older.”
 - Read more: <https://thehill.com/homenews/sunday-talk-shows/430419-sherrod-brown-pushes-for-medicare-buy-in-proposal-in-place-of>
- **Harris: 'Medicare for all' is not socialism.** “Sen. Kamala Harris (D-Calif.) on Tuesday defended her support for “Medicare for all,” saying it is not a socialist idea. Harris, a progressive Democratic presidential candidate who has embraced Medicare for all, told NBC that rising costs are making health care unaffordable. She said she wants to provide universal access to health care.”
 - Read more: <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/430659-harris-medicare-for-all-is-not-socialism>
- **Drug pricing fight centers on insulin.** “Lawmakers are zeroing in on the skyrocketing cost of insulin and putting pressure on manufacturers as they work to address high drug prices. Congressional Democrats, Republicans and the Trump administration say that lowering drug prices is a priority, and drugmakers are on the hot seat. Insulin could prove an easy target in that push. The drug hasn't changed much since it was first discovered nearly 100 years ago, and as newer forms of the drug have been introduced, the price has climbed.”
 - Read more: <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/430680-drug-pricing-fight-centers-on-insulin>
- **Top Dems blast administration's proposed ObamaCare changes.** “Top House and Senate Democrats on Wednesday blasted the Trump administration's

proposed changes for ObamaCare insurance markets, saying the rule will lead to increased costs and fewer people being covered.”

- Read more: <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/430791-top-dems-blast-proposed-administrations-obamacare-changes>
- **Supreme Court deals a fatal blow to Maryland drug ‘price gouging’ law.** “The Supreme Court on Tuesday dealt a fatal blow to an expansive Maryland law that aimed to bar drug makers from “price gouging” consumers. The law, which the Maryland General Assembly passed in 2017, would have prohibited generic drug manufacturers from raising prices in a manner the state deemed “unconscionable.”
 - Read more: <https://www.statnews.com/2019/02/19/supreme-court-declines-case-on-maryland-drug-price-gouging-law/>
- **Week Ahead**
 - **What questions will senators ask pharma executives? They gave us a preview.** “The 27 senators who sit on the Senate Finance Committee are set to grill seven drug company executives Tuesday morning about high prescription drug prices. STAT spoke with lawmakers in both parties about what they plan to ask, what they hope to hear, and what answers they won’t accept. Below are five major takeaways.”
 - Read more: <https://www.statnews.com/2019/02/26/what-to-expect-from-senators-at-drug-pricing-showdown/>

Regulatory and Administration Update

- **Government headed for close to half of nation’s health tab.** “Even without a history-making health care remake to deliver “Medicare-for-all,” government at all levels will be paying nearly half the nation’s health care tab in less than 10 years, according to a federal report released Wednesday. The government growth is driven by traditional Medicare, which is experiencing a surge in enrollment as aging baby boomers shift out of private coverage, according to the analysis from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.”
 - Read more: <https://www.apnews.com/5dc460ae8d8b4c8a93c6c3108fd71e9c>
- **Call for TEP Members - Practitioner Level Opioid Safety for Dialysis Patients.** “The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has contracted with the University of Michigan Kidney Epidemiology and Cost Center to develop practitioner level measures in the area of opioid safety for dialysis patients. The contract name is Kidney Disease Quality Measure Development, Maintenance, and Support. The contract number is 75FCMC18D0041, task order number 75FCMC18F0001. As part of its measure development process, CMS asks measure developers to convene groups of stakeholders and experts who contribute direction and thoughtful input to the measure developer during measure development and maintenance.”
 - Read more: <https://mailchi.mp/5582e6efbab6/call-for-tep-memberspractitioner-level-opioid-safety-for-dialysis-patients>

- ***White House doesn't back DeSantis on drug importation from Canada.*** "The White House stopped short of endorsing Florida's call for it to be able to import prescription drugs from Canada. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis (R) said at a press conference on Wednesday that President Trump had given his support for the state's proposal."
 - Read more: <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/431204-white-house-doesnt-back-desantis-on-drug-importation-from-canada>
- ***Trump steps up attack on Planned Parenthood.*** "President Trump is intensifying his attack on federal funding for Planned Parenthood with the introduction of new rules on Friday that are widely seen as a way of gutting federal funding to the group. The women's health organization could lose millions of dollars in funding if the sweeping changes to a federal family planning program are upheld in court."
 - Read more: <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/431217-trump-steps-up-attack-on-planned-parenthood>

Articles of Interest

- ***Why Is Hospice Care For Patients On Dialysis Inadequate?*** "Hospice care focuses on patient comfort during their last months of life differing from palliative care in that there is no longer any focus on "curative treatment." Medicare has provided this benefit since 1983 requiring a physician to certify that the patient has a life expectancy of six months or less. But because it is difficult to predict when we might die, there is no limit on the actual time spent with hospice care."
 - Read more: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2019/02/20/why-hospice-care-patients-dialysis-inadequate-13823>
- ***Deciding Not to Dialyze: What Comes Next?*** "Discussion about renal replacement therapy selection in our patients with CKD is complex, but an important part of any nephrology practice. If we know the patient well, it can be straightforward, maybe even "predictable." Even in those best-case circumstances, though, the first question must be asked and answered: "Is dialysis something that you want?"
 - Read more: <https://ajkdblog.org/2019/02/19/deciding-not-to-dialyze-what-comes-next/>
- ***Chamber launches ad blitz against Trump drug-pricing proposal.*** "The Chamber of Commerce is launching a seven-figure ad campaign targeting a proposal from the Trump administration aimed at bringing down drug prices. The proposal, which is fiercely opposed by the pharmaceutical industry and other groups, would link what Medicare pays for prescription drugs to what other countries pay."
 - Read more: <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/431049-chamber-of-commerce-launches-seven-figure-ad-campaign-against-trump-drug>
- ***Purdue exec agreed to hide OxyContin strength from doctors: report.*** "Purdue Pharma executive Richard Sackler agreed to hide the strength of opioid OxyContin from doctors, ProPublica and STAT reported Thursday. Sackler allegedly agreed not to contest the belief that OxyContin was less potent than morphine at the suggestion of sales and

marketing director Michael Friedman, the outlets said emails that appear in a sealed court deposition.”

- Read more: <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/other/430997-purdue-pharma-exec-agreed-to-hide-oxycotin-strength-from-doctors>
- ***Google launches effort to fight opioid epidemic.*** “Google is launching a new effort Thursday to make it easier for people to dispose of opioids. Federal agencies, state governments and local pharmacies helped Google identify 3,500 drug drop-off locations across the country where people are invited to dispose of leftover pain pills and other addictive drugs. Now, using Google Maps or search, users can look up phrases similar to "drug drop off near me" or "medication disposal near me" and find directions to the nearest permanent disposal locations.”
 - Read more: <https://thehill.com/policy/technology/430855-google-launches-effort-to-fight-opioid-epidemic>
- ***Kaiser medical school in Calif. to offer free tuition to first five classes of students.*** “California-based health-care company Kaiser Permanente announced Tuesday that it will provide free tuition to the first five classes of students who attend its new medical school in Pasadena, Calif. The Kaiser Permanente School of Medicine plans to begin offering classes in the summer of 2020 after recently receiving its preliminary accreditation.”
 - Read more: <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/430636-new-kaiser-medical-school-in-california-to-offer-free-tuition-to-all>