

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Weekly Capitol Hill Update - Monday, June 19, 2017

Congressional Schedule

*House*

- “Not in session today.” (CQ)
- **Week Ahead:** “On Tuesday, the House considers 14 bills under suspension of the rules, including foster care bills and several from the Homeland Security Committee. Additional measures the chamber is expected to take up later in the week include legislation (HR 1654) on permitting for surface water storage projects and a bill (HR 2842) related to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program.” (CQ)

*Senate*

- “Convenes at 4 p.m. and is scheduled to take a 5:30 p.m. confirmation vote on the nomination of Brock Long to be administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Democrats plan to take to the floor into the night to protest the Republican health care legislation.” (CQ)

Legislative Updates

- **Week in Review:**
  - *Trump knocks House health care bill as too harsh.* “President Donald Trump directed Senate Republicans to pass a generous health care bill at a meeting with more than a dozen GOP senators on Tuesday, arguing that the austere House health care bill is difficult to defend, according to people familiar with the meeting. The president also said Republicans risk getting savaged in the 2018 midterms if they fail to repeal Obamacare after a seven-year campaign against the law.”
    - To read more: <http://www.politico.com/story/2017/06/13/trump-urge-gop-senate-repeal-obamacare-239504/>
  - *Administration Weighs How to Stabilize Exchanges Amid Insurer Uncertainty.* “Senate Republicans said Tuesday that President Donald Trump was open to their suggestions about how to stabilize the Obamacare exchanges, but did not give any clear policy updates, leaving insurers hanging. Health and Human

Services Secretary Tom Price also highlighted the individual and small group markets as one of the “toughest challenges” for his employees, without providing specific steps that HHS would take. The focus on stabilizing the Affordable Care Act’s individual marketplace comes even as Senate Republicans are struggling to reach consensus on a bill that would overhaul major parts of the ACA.”

- To read more: <https://morningconsult.com/2017/06/13/administration-points-to-fewer-aca-insurer-while-weighing-how-to-stabilize-exchanges/>
  - ***Trump Administration Prepares a Drug Pricing Executive Order, Sources Say.*** “President Donald Trump’s administration is preparing an executive order aimed at lowering U.S. drug costs, according to people familiar with the matter, a move that could come within weeks on a campaign issue that has been largely left out of Republican legislative efforts in Congress. Top health and budget officials in the administration will meet Friday to discuss the issue, according to the people, who asked not to be identified because the session is private. Trump sought recommendations from the nation’s health agencies on reducing medication costs, Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price told senators last week.”
    - To read more: <https://www.bloomberg.com/politics/articles/2017-06-15/trump-administration-said-to-ready-drug-pricing-executive-order/>
  - ***Congress passes long-sought VA accountability bill.*** “Congress approved long-sought legislation Tuesday to make firing employees easier for the Department of Veterans Affairs, part of an effort urged by President Donald Trump to fix a struggling agency serving millions of veterans. The House cleared the bill, 368-55, replacing an earlier version that Democrats had criticized as overly unfair to workers. The Senate passed the bipartisan legislation by voice vote last week. It will go to Trump later this week for his signature.”
    - To read more: <http://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/congress-passes-long-sought-va-accountability-bill-48016464/>
- **Week Ahead:**
    - ***ObamaCare repeal and the Senate: Where it stands.*** “It’s a key two weeks for Senate Republicans, who are edging closer to a vote as soon as the end of this month on legislation to repeal and replace ObamaCare. Lawmakers have yet to see text of a bill and are deeply divided over key questions, such as how quickly to phase out ObamaCare’s Medicaid expansion. They’re also under enormous pressure to move as the Trump White House seeks a legislative win and the clock ticks on other priorities, from tax reform to funding the government and lifting the debt ceiling.”
      - To read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/338198-obamacare-repeal-and-the-senate-where-it-stands/>
    - ***Democrats Plot Senate Slowdown Over Obamacare Repeal.*** “Senate Democrats have decided to muddle the chamber’s work in a bid to highlight the closed-door

nature of Republicans' health care negotiations. When the Democrats take the floor Monday evening for a series of speeches against the GOP's efforts to roll back the 2010 health care law, they will also begin objecting to a variety of unanimous consent requests that generally govern more routine Senate floor business. According to a senior Senate Democratic aide, there might be some exceptions for honorary resolutions, but the Democrats seem intent on slowing down the bulk of business."

- To read more: <http://www.rollcall.com/news/politics/democrats-plot-senate-slowdown-obamacare-repeal/>
- ***GOP considers canceling August recess to salvage agenda.*** "Alarmed by the stalemate on healthcare reform, lack of progress on tax reform and appropriations bills that are far behind schedule, Republican lawmakers across Congress are increasingly willing to consider canceling the month-long August recess. Senate Republican negotiators reported that they are not close to a deal on healthcare reform and that scheduling a vote by July 4, which Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) has pushed, is likely unrealistic."
  - To read more: <http://thehill.com/homenews/senate/338220-gop-considers-cancelling-august-recess-to-salvage-agenda/>

### **Regulatory Updates**

- ***Press Release: CMS Publishes 2017 Edition of the CMS ESRD Measures Manual.*** "CMS has released a new edition of the CMS ESRD Measures Manual (Manual) addressing the methods and calculations that CMS will use to score the performance of outpatient dialysis facilities during calendar year 2017. Those scores will be used in Payment Year (PY) 2019 of the End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) Quality Incentive Program (QIP), as well as in the October 2017 release of the Dialysis Facility Compare (DFC) Star Ratings. The Manual contains detailed specifications that underwrite clinical performance measures in the ESRD QIP and DFC. In this way, CMS provides a transparent and detailed description of how ESRD measures are calculated, offering the public a comprehensive understanding of how CMS evaluates the quality of care provided by dialysis facilities."
  - To read more:  
<http://kidneycarepartners.com/filemanager/files/CMS%20Publishes%202017%20Edition%20of%20the%20CMS%20ESRD%20Measures%20Manual%20Memo.pdf>
  - [CMS ESRD Measures Manual for the 2017 Performance Period](#)
- ***MedPAC Explores QPP Makeover – Also targets Medicare Part B drug costs.*** "In its latest report, the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) explored giving the barely begun Quality Payment Program (QPP) a makeover, suggested a new market mechanism to tame the rising costs of certain specialty drugs and recommended that Congress jumpstart its timeline on equalizing payments across sites in the post-acute care space. MedPAC, a nonpartisan body of health policy experts and providers charged with advising Congress on Medicare payment and policy matters, issues two reports each year. The Commission has been highly critical of the Centers for Medicare and

Medicaid Services (CMS) Quality Payment Program, the new way of paying physicians and certain other clinicians, which replaces the deeply unpopular Sustainable Growth Rate system.”

- To read more:  
<https://www.medpagetoday.com/publichealthpolicy/medicare/66105/>
- [MedPAC June 2017 Report to the Congress on Medicare and the Health Care Delivery System](#)
  
- **MACPAC report on Medicaid touts DSRIP, warns about behavioral and dental health.** “As the 50th anniversary of Medicaid approaches, a new report claims there is much work to do on the state-federal program, from finding sustainable hospital payment reforms to tackling the problem of poor oral health, according to the Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission, or MACPAC. But it is the five-year-old Delivery System Reform Incentive Payments program that ranked highest in MACPAC’s annual report to Congress on the progress and problems in Medicaid.”
  - To read more: <http://www.healthcarefinancenews.com/news/macpac-report-medicaid-touts-dsrp-warns-about-behavioral-and-dental-health/>
  - [MACPAC June 2017 Report to Congress on Medicaid and CHIP](#)
  
- **CMS: Per-Person Health Spending Varies Widely by State – But rankings among states changed little with ACA.** “Per-capita healthcare spending varies widely by state, but each state's rankings in this area have not changed very much over the last few years, according to a report from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. "Annual growth in personal health care spending by payer varied by state depending on how a state implemented the ACA [Affordable Care Act] coverage expansions and the extent to which the recession and recovery affected states differentially," wrote David Lassman, of CMS, and colleagues in an article published online Wednesday in Health Affairs. Although the report covered spending from the years 1991-2014, the authors' discussion in the article focused on the years 2010-2014.”
  - To read more:  
<https://www.medpagetoday.com/publichealthpolicy/medicare/66042/>

### Articles of Interest

- **Tom Price leads the charge to reshape healthcare.** “In March, new HHS Secretary Dr. Tom Price said no Americans would be hurt financially by the House Republican bill to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act. He predicted the number of people with insurance would increase. A few days later, during a CNN town hall event, Price defended the bill, which would phase out enhanced federal funding for the ACA's Medicaid expansion. He was confronted by Brian Kline, a Pennsylvania cancer survivor, who told Price the expansion "saved my life and saved me from medical bankruptcy." Kline then asked Price: "Why do you want to take away my Medicaid expansion?" The secretary responded that "we don't want to take care away from anybody" but that Medicaid has "real problems" and the administration wants to give people currently on Medicaid better coverage options.”

- To read more: [http://www.modernhealthcare.com/article/20170616/50\\_MOST\\_INFLUENTIAL/170619954/](http://www.modernhealthcare.com/article/20170616/50_MOST_INFLUENTIAL/170619954/)
- **Press Release: Cricket Health and American Kidney Fund Partner to Deliver Education and Support to Chronic Kidney Disease Patients.** “Cricket Health, a developer of technology-enabled care solutions for chronic kidney disease (CKD) patients, and the American Kidney Fund (AKF), the nation's leading nonprofit working on behalf of the 30 million Americans with kidney disease, announced a collaborative partnership to bring education and support to advanced stage CKD and end-stage renal disease (ESRD) patients. Over the next eight weeks, 100 advanced stage CKD and ESRD patients from AKF's patient network will voluntarily enroll into Cricket Health's award-winning online kidney care platform, which connects patients and their loved ones to structured, multi-channel educational content, virtual healthcare expertise and a robust community of peers and patient mentors in order to help them make informed decisions regarding ongoing disease management and treatment options.”
  - To read more: <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/cricket-health-and-american-kidney-fund-partner-to-deliver-education-and-support-to-chronic-kidney-disease-patients-300475441.html/>
- **Snake Solution: Dangerous Venom Could Fight Kidney Disease.** “The venom of the green mamba — one the most dangerous snakes in Africa — might one day help to treat people who have a genetic disorder that affects the kidneys, according to a new study conducted in mice. The disorder, called polycystic kidney disease, causes numerous cysts to grow in the kidneys. The disorder may lead to kidney damage, according to the National Kidney Foundation. But for babies born with a severe form of the disorder, the condition can also be deadly, according to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases.”
  - To read more: <https://www.livescience.com/59537-green-mamba-venom-could-fight-polycystic-kidney-disease.html/>
- **Interactive Medical Drones: No Longer Science Fiction.** “The towering tornado that struck Hattiesburg, Mississippi, in 2013 ripped roofs off houses, twisted steel girders as though they were Play-Doh, obliterated buildings, and tossed cars through the air like toys. It barreled down Hardy Street “like a bowling ball,” said Dr. Italo Subbarao. In the aftermath of the twister, Subbarao, an associate dean and disaster medicine specialist at the William Carey University College of Osteopathic Medicine in Hattiesburg, sent his students out to study how quickly emergency medical teams had responded to the disaster. The tornado, with winds up to 170 mph, had injured at least 80 people. In some cases, the students found, emergency medical responders had been slowed by fallen trees, power lines and debris as they tried to reach the injured. That research led Subbarao to wonder if there was a way to deliver medical care before emergency responders could navigate the mayhem that comes with a natural or man-made disaster. His answer: a drone outfitted with audiovisual equipment and medical supplies.”
  - To read more: <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2017/06/16/interactive-medical-drones-no-longer-science-fiction/>

## Hearings and Markups

### **Tuesday, June 20th**

- The Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Subcommittee of Senate Appropriations Committee holds a hearing on the proposed budget estimates and justification for FY2018 for the Food and Drug Administration.
  - 10:30 a.m., 192 Dirksen Senate Office Building
- The Multilateral International Development, Multilateral Institutions, and International Economic, Energy, and Environmental Policy Subcommittee of Senate Foreign Relations Committee holds a hearing on "The World Health Organization and Pandemic Protection in a Globalized World."
  - 2:30 p.m., 419 Dirksen Senate Office Building

### **Wednesday, June 21st**

- The Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee holds a hearing on "Cybersecurity Regulation Harmonization."
  - 10:30 a.m., 342 Dirksen Senate Office Building
- The Indian, Insular, and Alaska Native Affairs Subcommittee of House Natural Resources Committee holds a hearing on H.R.2662, the "Restoring Accountability in the Indian Health Service Act of 2017."
  - 2:00 p.m., 1324 Longworth House Office Building
- The Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Subcommittee of Senate Appropriations Committee holds a hearing on proposed budget estimates and justification for FY2018 and FY2019 for the Veterans Affairs Department.
  - 2:30 p.m., 124 Dirksen Senate Office Building

### **Thursday, June 22nd**

- The Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee of Senate Appropriations Committee holds a hearing on the FY2018 budget for the National Institutes of Health.
  - 10:00 a.m., 138 Dirksen Senate Office Building
- The Health Subcommittee of House Veterans' Affairs Committee holds a hearing on "FY2018 Department of Veterans Affairs Budget Request for the Veterans Health Administration."
  - 2:00 p.m., 334 Cannon House Office Building

### **Friday, June 23rd**

- The Health Subcommittee of House Energy and Commerce Committee holds a hearing on "Examining the Extension of Safety Net Health Programs."
  - 9:00 a.m., 2123 Rayburn House Office Building