

American Nephrology Nurses Association

Weekly Capitol Hill Update - Monday, September 18, 2017

Congressional Schedule

Senate

- Senate convenes Monday at 3pm; holds final votes to advance and then pass annual defense authorization bill

House

- House on recess until Sept. 25; has pro forma sessions Monday, Thursday

Legislative Update

- **Week in Review**

- *Medicare for All or State Control: Health Care Plans Go to Extremes.* “In one Senate office building, some of the leading lights of the Democratic Party gathered Wednesday to embrace what was once a proposal only of the far left: a huge expansion of Medicare, large enough to open the popular, government-run health program to all Americans. In another Senate office building, a smaller but equally adamant group of Republican senators stood together to take one last stab at dismantling the Affordable Care Act. They proposed instead to send each state a lump sum of federal money, along with sweeping new discretion over how to use it. Important elements in both parties are trying to move beyond President Barack Obama’s health care law, which has always been a complicated, politically difficult mix of government and private health insurance. But they are moving in radically different directions. The proposals appeared to have only one thing in common: Neither is likely to be enacted any time soon.”
 - To read more:
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/13/us/politics/health-care-obamacare-single-payer-graham-cassidy.html>
- *Deal Struck to Extend Financing for Children’s Health Program.* “The chairman of the Senate Finance Committee and the top Democrat on the panel announced on Tuesday night that they had reached agreement on a plan to prevent the imminent exhaustion of federal funds for the Children’s Health Insurance Program. The current appropriation runs out at the end of this month, and many

states will exhaust their allotments of federal money later this year or early next year. Nearly nine million children receive health insurance through the program, on which the federal government has been spending about \$14 billion a year. The program is for children in families that make too much to qualify for Medicaid, but not enough to afford other coverage.”

- To read more:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/12/us/politics/childrens-health-insurance-program-chip-deal-hatch-wyden.html?ref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Fhealth>

- **Sen. Lamar Alexander says patient protections will remain intact under short-term Obamacare fix.** “The Republican senator leading a bipartisan effort to stabilize the individual health insurance market stressed Tuesday that the proposed legislation would not strip away key patient protections enacted under the Affordable Care Act. Sen. Lamar Alexander of Tennessee said he wants to keep in place a provision guaranteeing that anyone can buy an insurance policy and other protections that bar insurers from rescinding coverage, charging higher rates to patients with pre-existing conditions and imposing annual or lifetime limits on health benefits.”

- To read more:

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2017/09/12/sen-lamar-alexander-says-patient-protections-remain-intact-under-short-term-obamacare-fix/655348001/>

- **Week Ahead**

- **Senators near deal to stabilize ObamaCare markets.** “The leaders of the Senate Health Committee expressed optimism Thursday that a bipartisan deal to stabilize the insurance markets was within reach. The goal, according to Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.), is to put the final touches on a bipartisan package the week of Sept. 18 with the hope the Senate will pass it by the end of the month. The panel held four hearings on the topic over the past two weeks, bringing in governors, insurance commissioners and experts as Alexander and the committee's top Democrat, Sen. Patty Murray (Wash.), attempt to craft a deal to help the insurance markets. At the final hearing on Thursday, Alexander laid out the main themes that emerged throughout the hours of discussion, and it's expected this could serve as the framework for a deal.”

- To read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/350921-week-ahead-senators-near-deal-to-stabilize-obamacare-markets>

- **Senate committee schedules hearing on health care block grants.** “The Senate Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs committee will hold a hearing next week on health care block grants. The hearing comes as some Republican senators push a last-ditch ObamaCare repeal bill, which would block grants some of the law's funding to the states. The committee, chaired by Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), has limited jurisdiction over health care matters, but Johnson is

one of the sponsors of the bill. Johnson was a critic of the closed-door process in drafting the previous repeal bill.”

- To read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/351170-senate-committee-schedules-hearing-on-health-care-block-grants>

Regulatory and Administration Update

- ***Applicability of Reporting Requirements for Hospitals, PPS-Exempt Cancer Hospitals, Inpatient Psychiatric Facilities, Skilled Nursing Facilities, Home Health Agencies, Hospices, Inpatient Rehabilitation Facilities, Long-Term Care Hospitals, Ambulatory Surgical Centers, and Renal Dialysis Facilities Affected by Hurricane Irma .*** “The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is granting exceptions under certain Medicare quality reporting and value-based purchasing programs to acute care hospitals, PPSexempt cancer hospitals, inpatient psychiatric facilities, skilled nursing facilities, home health agencies, hospices, inpatient rehabilitation facilities, renal dialysis facilities, long-term care hospitals, and ambulatory surgical centers located in areas affected by Hurricane Irma due to the devastating impact of the storm.”
 - To read more: <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/Emergency/Downloads/Memo-Requirements-Facilities-Irma.pdf>
- ***RPA Comments on the 2018 Medicare Fee Schedule Proposed Rule.*** “RPA’s comments are on the following areas: valuation of the Dialysis Circuit Code Family of Services; Proposed Refinements to the Therapeutic Apheresis Services; and CMS’ Proposal for Reporting of Patient Relationship Codes Using Modifiers.”
 - To read the full comment letter: http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.renalmd.org/resource/resmgr/LegRegsComp/2018_MFS_NPRM_COM_FINAL.pdf

Articles of Interest

- ***Dialysis providers await return of power source to reopen clinics after Irma.*** “Just days after rolling up their sleeves and re-opening clinics in storm-soaked South Texas, dialysis providers held on tight this past weekend to see how Hurricane Irma would ravage south Florida. Irma tore through the Caribbean as a category 5 hurricane and brushed up against Puerto Rico before making landfall at the tip of the Florida Keys as a category 4 hurricane. The high-power winds and rain then went up through Naples, Bradenton, Jacksonville, Ft. Lauderdale area, and Miami, where streets were flooded and power was cut. By Sunday, Sept. 10, 80% of Miami-Dade County had no electricity, and communications weren’t restored until three days later. In the Florida Keys, report indicate that 1 of every 4 homes were destroyed from the hurricane, and emergency officials say at least 56 deaths in Florida and other states are linked to Irma.”
 - To read more: <https://www.nephrologynews.com/dialysis-providers-await-return-of-power-source-to-reopen-clinics-after-irma/>
- ***Kidney Community Executes Rapid Response to Help Dialysis Patients Affected by Hurricane Harvey.*** “As thousands of dialysis patients in the Texas Gulf region face the

reality of being stranded without access to vital health care treatments, Kidney Care Partners and its community of dialysis providers, patient advocates, physicians and product manufacturers are working to provide immediate, essential care to those impacted by Hurricane Harvey. Members of Kidney Care Partners – a coalition of patient advocates, dialysis professionals, care providers and manufacturers dedicated to working together to improve quality of care for individuals with Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) – are drawing upon previous partnerships amid natural disasters to ensure the thousands of dialysis patients in the Texas region continue to receive routine, life-sustaining care.”

- To read more: <http://kidneycarepartners.com/press/kidney-community-executes-rapid-response-to-help-dialysis-patients-affected-by-hurricane-harvey/>
- **CBO: Trump is making Obamacare premiums more expensive.** “The Trump administration’s management of Obamacare is causing higher premiums and lower enrollment in the individual market, a new report from the Congressional Budget Office finds. The nonpartisan office estimates that average premiums in the health law marketplaces will be 15 percent higher next year “largely because of short-term market uncertainty – in particular, insurers’ uncertainty about whether federal funding for certain subsidies that are currently available will continue to be provided.” The CBO also estimates that there will be less competition in the marketplaces next year, which it also attributes to the uncertain federal environment surrounding the health law’s future.”
 - To read more: <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/9/14/16308502/cbo-trump-obamacare-premiums>
- **GOP asks CBO: How much does Bernie Sanders' single payer bill cost?** “Sen. John Barrasso, chairman of the Senate Republican Policy Committee, on Thursday, asked the Congressional Budget Office to determine the cost of the single payer health insurance bill introduced by Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt. The score would make projections about how many people would have health insurance under the Sanders bill, called the Medicare for All Act, and would project how much the government would spend on the system, including through increases in the debt and taxes. Barrasso is also requesting that the report make projections about the impact the bill would have on employment.”
 - To read more: <http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/gop-asks-cbo-how-much-does-bernie-sanders-single-payer-bill-cost/article/2634463>
- **Start-up working on breakthrough in 3-D printing of human organs.** “Prellis Biologics, a human tissue engineering company, has invented a new way to create what it says are viable human organs using near instantaneous 3-D printing. This type of development, if proven out, could be a boon for hospitals and health systems with long lists of patients waiting for donor organs. Founded by two scientists with extensive experience in 3-D tissue imaging and stem cell biology, Prellis Biologics says it is solving the greatest obstacle to producing functional human tissue in the lab – the ability to print microvasculature. Without the complex microvascular system needed to supply nutrients and oxygen to cells, an organ cannot survive.”
 - To read more: <http://www.healthcareitnews.com/news/start-working-breakthrough-3-d-printing-human-organs>

- ***National Kidney Foundation Statement on Selena Gomez and Living Organ Donation.***
“On behalf of National Kidney Foundation (NKF), we would like to extend our heartfelt support to Ms. Selena Gomez as she continues on her path towards kidney health. The news of her kidney transplant, and the selfless gift of life donated by her friend, Francia Raisa, gives all people waiting on a transplant hope.”
 - To read the full statement: <https://www.kidney.org/news/national-kidney-foundation-statement-selena-gomez-and-living-organ-donation>