

**American Nephrology Nurses Association**

**Weekly Capitol Hill Update - Tuesday, September 5, 2017**

**Congressional Schedule**

**Senate**

- Senate convenes at 3 pm; votes at 5:30 pm on nomination of Timothy Kelly to be U.S. district judge for the District of Columbia

**House**

- House meets at 2 pm; considers four bills under suspension of the rules
- House will vote Wednesday on a Hurricane Harvey relief bill that won't contain language aimed at staving off a U.S. default on its debt, according to a House GOP aide
- 4 pm: Rules Cmte meets on vehicle for 8-measure appropriations package, H.R. 3354

**Legislative Update**

- **ANNA President Writes Letter in Support of Those Affected by Hurricane Harvey.** ANNA President Alice Hellebrand wrote a letter in support of the kidney community impacted by the Hurricane, including ANNA resources available to support those affected.
  - To read the full letter:  
<https://annanurse.org/download/reference/harveyLetter.pdf>
- **Week in Review**
  - *Senate rulemaker: Fast-track for ObamaCare repeal ends this month.* "The Senate parliamentarian has ruled that a fast-track procedure being used by Republicans to try to repeal ObamaCare expires on Sept. 30, setting a fast-approaching deadline for the GOP to repeal the law. The parliamentarian ruled that the process known as reconciliation expires on Sept. 30, which is the end of the fiscal year, according to Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), the ranking member of the Senate Budget Committee. The move severely limits the amount of time Republicans have to pass a repeal of ObamaCare. Chances for repeal had already plummeted after the Senate failed to pass a bill in July, but some Republicans are still holding out hope. After Sept. 30, Republicans would need 60 votes in the

Senate, meaning they would need eight Democrats to vote for a repeal bill, which will not happen.”

- To read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/348891-senate-rulemaker-fast-track-for-obamacare-repeal-ends-this-month>

- *Kasich, Hickenlooper release plan to stabilize ObamaCare markets.* “Congress should retain ObamaCare’s individual mandate until there’s a better replacement, according to a proposal released Thursday by a bipartisan group of governors. The compromise plan, which is spearheaded by Govs. John Kasich of Ohio (R) and John Hickenlooper of Colorado (D), is meant to help lawmakers find common ground to help stabilize the insurance markets. The governors acknowledged that the mandate, which requires people to purchase health insurance or pay a fine, is unpopular.”

- To read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/health-reform-implementation/348695-kasich-hickenlooper-release-plan-on-obamacare>

- *Bipartisan group of governors calls on Congress to shore up elements of Affordable Care Act.* “A bipartisan group of governors is trying to jump-start efforts to strengthen private insurance under the Affordable Care Act, urging Congress to take prompt steps to stabilize marketplaces created by law while giving states more freedom from its rules. In a blueprint issued Thursday, the eight governors ask House and Senate leaders of both parties to take several steps to reverse the rising rates and dwindling choices facing many of the 10 million Americans who buy health plans on their own through ACA marketplaces.”

- To read more: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/bipartisan-group-of-governors-calls-on-congress-to-shore-up-elements-of-affordable-care-act/2017/08/31/7853b978-8e71-11e7-84c0-02cc069f2c37\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.3b3c885719d4](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/bipartisan-group-of-governors-calls-on-congress-to-shore-up-elements-of-affordable-care-act/2017/08/31/7853b978-8e71-11e7-84c0-02cc069f2c37_story.html?utm_term=.3b3c885719d4)

- **Week Ahead**

- *Obstacles await as Congress resumes health care fight.* “Republican hopes for repealing and replacing former President Barack Obama’s health care law are still twitching in Congress, though barely. Leaders lack the votes to pass something and face a fresh obstacle — the Senate parliamentarian ruled Friday that Republicans only have the ability to dismantle the law with 51 votes until the end of the month. It’s among several health issues lawmakers face when they return from summer recess, even as fights over the budget and helping Texas recover from Hurricane Harvey grab center stage.”

- To read more: <https://apnews.com/fda562f69ceb44b48e7a492c11800c9e/Obstacles-await-as-Congress-resumes-health-care-fight>

- *Senate’s Obamacare fixes would build on heavy lifting by states.* “While Congress was busy bickering over repealing the health law, officials in red and blue states worked frantically to soothe anxious insurers, tamp down rate

increases and insulate their markets from the ceaseless chaos in Washington. The result is an Obamacare system that's still vulnerable, but far from the "disaster" President Donald Trump and his top health officials describe. Every enrollee in the nation is poised to have at least one coverage option this fall. State regulators have haggled repeatedly to keep premiums from skyrocketing. And despite fears of bare counties and crumbling markets, the intense state-level groundwork has brought Obamacare almost single-handedly back from the brink."

- To read more: <http://www.politico.com/story/2017/09/05/obamacare-senate-fixes-states-trump-242272>
- ***Week ahead: Congress returns to take up bipartisan health care effort.*** "Congress will kick off a busy month on health care when it returns from recess Tuesday. The Senate's Health Committee will hold two hearings in the coming week on a bipartisan healthcare bill, with testimony from governors and state insurance officials on Wednesday and Thursday, in addition to two more hearings the following week. The goal is to pass a bill by the end of the month to stabilize the insurance markets for 2018. It's expected the bill would fund key ObamaCare insurer payments, known as cost-sharing reduction subsidies, and make some changes to the law's 1332 waivers for states."
  - To read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/348872-week-ahead-congress-returns-from-recess-to-packed-health-care-schedule>

### **Regulatory and Administration Update**

- ***CMS facilitates access to care for dialysis patients impacted by Hurricane Harvey.*** "Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Administrator Seema Verma today announced that the agency is designating dialysis facilities licensed in Texas and Louisiana, but not yet certified to provide care for Medicare beneficiaries, as Special Purpose Renal Dialysis Facilities (SPRDF) if they meet certain criteria and request Medicare provider status so they can serve as Medicare dialysis facilities for a limited period of time. This is part of the agency's ongoing response to support residents in the impacted areas who need access to these critical life-saving services."
  - To read more: <https://www.cms.gov/Newsroom/MediaReleaseDatabase/Press-releases/2017-Press-releases-items/2017-08-31-2.html>
- ***Trump Administration Whacks Millions From Budget Used To Push Obamacare.*** "President Donald Trump has insisted for months that "Obamacare is already dead." His administration matched its harsh words with damaging action on Thursday – slashing millions of dollars from the government's budget to promote the health law's annual open enrollment season beginning in two months. The move is likely to translate into reduced marketing and fewer navigators – trained representatives deployed by nonprofit groups that receive federal grants to help people understand health insurance options and purchase a plan. The effect could cause more confusion for consumers in an abbreviated enrollment period that is 45 days shorter than last year – running from Nov. 1 to Dec. 15."

- To read more: <http://khn.org/news/trump-administration-whacks-obamacare-promotion-budget-down-to-economy-size/>

### **Articles of Interest**

- ***Dialysis providers respond to Hurricane Harvey.*** “Dozens of dialysis clinics remained closed Monday night in reaction to massive flooding along the Texas Gulf Coast from Hurricane Harvey. Coastal towns and big cities like Houston were overwhelmed with 120 MPH winds and more than 30 inches of rainfall over a three-day period. According to the Texas Emergency ESRD Coalition (TEEC), 59 clinics were still closed as of Monday night in Houston, 11 in Fulshear, and five in Corpus Christi. Many providers stated on the TEEC website that the clinics were closed due to flooding, no power, or because staff could not get to the clinic. Some clinics that were open were limiting treatments to two hours.”
  - To read more: <https://www.nephrologynews.com/dialysis-providers-react-to-hurricane-harvey/>
- ***Inside The ‘Impossible’ Mission To Rescue 33 Kids Desperate For Dialysis During Harvey.*** “By Monday evening, Dr. Michael Braun, chief of the pediatric nephrology center at Texas Children’s Hospital, was getting nervous. Hurricane Harvey had flooded the city, leaving many roads impassable and stranding thousands of people in their homes. It had already been three days since the storm hit. For dozens of his young patients, going multiple days without treatment could be deadly. Braun’s center is one of the country’s largest clinics for children with kidney failure, providing care for babies through young adults. His patients rely on dialysis, a treatment that filters blood to remove waste and excess fluid, to stay alive. They need the treatment three to four days a week, with a maximum of two days between sessions. And without it, they can suffer severe consequences: hypertension, headaches, chest pain, vomiting and ultimately death.”
  - To read more: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/inside-the-rescue-mission-of-33-children-in-need-of-dialysis-during-harvey\\_us\\_59a8e389e4b0b5e530fd8beb?ncid=tweetlnkushpmg00000067](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/inside-the-rescue-mission-of-33-children-in-need-of-dialysis-during-harvey_us_59a8e389e4b0b5e530fd8beb?ncid=tweetlnkushpmg00000067)
- ***Houston hospitals may not be back to normal for a month.*** “Amid the evacuation of approximately 1,500 patients from Houston-area hospitals, officials are commending the emergency response by health providers – while also cautioning that it may be weeks before the facilities are back to business as usual. The SouthEast Texas Regional Advisory Council – which has overseen catastrophic medical operations since Hurricane Harvey as part of Houston’s emergency command center – estimates that nearly two dozen hospitals have evacuated patients by ambulance and airplane over the course of the past week.”
  - To read more: <https://www.statnews.com/2017/08/30/houston-area-hospitals-evacuations/>
- ***Five public health crises facing Houston after Harvey.*** “Texas is reeling from Hurricane Harvey, with thousands of residents displaced by flood waters and a climbing death toll. But the dangers go beyond the rising waters, as the storm brings an array of public

health dangers, from mosquitoes to mold. Here are five public health threats facing authorities in Houston.”

- To read more: <http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/348620-five-public-health-crises-facing-houston-after-harvey>
- **5 Outside-The-Box Ideas For Fixing The Individual Insurance Market.** “With Republican efforts to “repeal and replace” the Affordable Care Act stalled, tentative bipartisan initiatives are in the works to shore up the fragile individual insurance market that serves roughly 17 million Americans. The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee launches hearings the week Congress returns in September on “stabilizing premiums in the individual insurance market” that will feature state governors and insurance commissioners. A bipartisan group in the House is also working to come up with compromise proposals.”
  - To read more: <http://khn.org/news/5-outside-the-box-ideas-for-fixing-the-individual-insurance-market/>
- **What Happens If You're Forced To Switch Health Plans When You're Sick?** “Joanna Joshua, 39, panicked when she opened a letter from her family’s insurer, Cigna, only to learn it was pulling out of California’s individual market next year. The Santa Clarita resident would have no choice but to change health plans. “What am I going to do?” Joshua wondered. Her 2-year-old daughter, Jasmine Winning, needs heart surgery next year because of a rare disease she’s had since birth. The toddler has had two heart operations already because she was born with a malformed heart – a condition resulting from Heterotaxy syndrome, in which internal organs are not where they should be. Joshua believes it’s critical to keep the same doctors for her daughter because they know her unique anatomy. Disrupting the relationship between Jasmine and her medical team would be a “threat to her life,” the girl’s mother said. Cigna’s decision, along with the recent news that Anthem Blue Cross will pull out of the individual market across a large swath of California, has prompted a key state lawmaker to propose legislation that would help seriously ill patients like Jasmine keep their doctors even if those doctors don’t contract with the new health plan.”
  - To read the article: <http://khn.org/news/what-happens-if-youre-forced-to-switch-health-plans-when-youre-sick/>

### **Events**

Wednesday, September 6th

- The Senate HELP Committee will hold a hearing on “Stabilizing Premiums and Helping Individuals in the Individual Insurance Market for 2018: State Insurance Commissioners.”
  - 10:00 am @ 216 Hart Senate Office Building
- The Senate Appropriations Labor Health and Human Services Subcommittee will hold a hearing marking up the “Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2018.”
  - 11:00 am @ 124 Dirksen Senate Office Building

Thursday, September 7th

- The Senate HELP Committee will hold a hearing on “Stabilizing Premiums and Helping Individuals in the Individual Insurance Market for 2018: Governors.”
  - 9:00 am @ 216 Hart Senate Office Building
- The Senate Finance Committee will hold a hearing on “The Children's Health Insurance Program: The Path Forward.”
  - 10:00 am @ 215 Dirksen Senate Office Building
- The Senate Appropriations Full Committee will hold a hearing marking up the “Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2018.”
  - 10:30 am @ 106 Dirksen Senate Office Building

Friday, September 8th

- Govs. Hickenlooper and Kasich discuss bipartisan proposal to stabilize health insurance market.
  - AEI Auditorium, 1789 Massachusetts Avenue NW