The following information comes from directly from news sources including Bloomberg Government, Kaiser Health News, and other news sources.

**Schedules: White House and Congress**

**WHITE HOUSE:**

- Biden, First Lady Jill Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris, and Second Gentleman Douglas Emhoff attend the memorial service at 11 a.m. of the late Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.) at the Washington National Cathedral.

- Biden delivers closing remarks to the virtual Summit for Democracy.

- Biden will depart Washington for Wilmington, Del., at 5:45 p.m.

**CONGRESS:**

- The House and Senate are out today. The Senate returns Monday, the House on Tuesday.

**Congressional, Health Policy, and Political News**

- **Bloomberg Government: Increased Obamacare Subsidies in New Senate Bill:** Increased funding for labor enforcement, job training and health care are all part of the updated proposal published on Saturday by a Senate panel as part of a massive tax and spending bill that could see floor action in the next few weeks. The updated text from the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee largely mirrors language the House passed last month. It’s possible the measure will need to change before it hits the Senate floor, but the main components—including expanded access to health care—are likely to stay in place.
  - The Senate Finance Committee also released a draft of its plan with a series of tax provisions. That measure carries a provision opposed by Manchin to establish a new entitlement program giving four weeks of paid family and medical leave to workers who aren’t given the benefit by their employers. It’s unclear whether that provision will remain in the package when the Senate votes.
  - The Finance Committee’s portion of the package also includes a proposal similar to House-passed language to allow the federal government to negotiate the cost of some of the most costly drugs and insulin, and it would also require drugmakers to provide rebates when they increase prices of drugs under Medicare by more than the rate of inflation.
  - Meanwhile, the health and labor panel’s proposal includes increased Obamacare subsidies, akin to the House-passed bill, and would for the first time extend them to people who make no more than 138% of the federal poverty level in states where they aren’t currently eligible. It would also set a $35 cap on insulin copays.
KHN: Split Supreme Court Leaves Texas Abortion Law In Effect, But Says Providers May Sue: In the second-most anticipated abortion case of the year, eight justices on the U.S. Supreme Court ruled Friday that abortion providers can challenge a Texas law that has effectively banned most abortions in the state since it was allowed to take effect in September. But the court also ruled that the federal Justice Department could not intervene in the dispute, and it refused to block the law for now. (Nonetheless, the justices were sharply divided in their opinions on the case. The majority opinion in the Texas decision, Whole Woman’s Health et al. v. Jackson et al., did not directly address the fate of abortion rights in the United States. Rather, the conservative, anti-abortion majority on the court is expected to take on that larger question in a separate case out of Mississippi that was argued Dec. 1.

Bloomberg Government: Medicare Panel Eyes Nursing Home Payment Cut: A congressional advisory panel Friday moved to recommend that Medicare payments for nursing homes, home health agencies and inpatient rehabilitation facilities be cut by 5% next year, citing adequate reimbursement rates for such facilities. Only long-term care hospitals would enjoy a payment increase next year under the draft recommendations adopted by the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission on the final day of its December meeting.

Bloomberg Government: Biden’s Economic Package Risks Languishing: Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) insists the Senate will pass President Joe Biden’s nearly $2 trillion tax-and-spending package before Christmas, but there’s still much work to do and time is running short. A delay into the new year risks slowing momentum for Democrats who need this legislative victory behind them as they fight to maintain narrow majorities in the House and Senate in the 2022 midterm elections. The signature bill includes spending on Democratic priorities such as child care and climate change and drastically changes the tax cuts Republicans won under President Donald Trump.

CIDRAP: Study Suggests Heart Damage May Last Up To 1 Year In COVID-19 Patients: A small study of 66 COVID-19 patients suggests that those who continue to be short of breath during physical activity 1 year after recovery may have suffered heart damage, according to new data presented at EuroEcho 2021, a meeting of the European Society of Cardiology. The 66 patients were hospitalized for COVID-19 in March and April of 2020 at the University Hospital in Brussels, Belgium. None had previous heart or lung disease. The average patient age was 50 years, and 67% were men.

Bloomberg Government: Drugmaker Prices Exploited U.S. Market, Probe Finds: Medicare could have saved more than $25 billion if allowed to negotiate better prices for the most costly medicines over a five-year period, according to a new study released by a House committee. The report, the result of a nearly three-year investigation into how pharmaceutical companies set their prices, is meant to underscore the importance of enacting Democrats’ Build Back Better domestic policy package. That measure would direct the U.S. to demand lower prices from drugmakers for expensive drugs.
Drugmakers including Pfizer, Teva, and Celgene specifically target the U.S. for price hikes because there is no government effort to control the price of drugs, according to internal documents released by the House Oversight and Reform Committee. Some of the companies also pumped money into patient assistance programs specifically to boost their revenue, another quirk of the U.S. pharmaceutical marketplace.

- **Stat: Gilead, Bristol Jaw Over Superiority Of CAR-T Treatments For Blood Cancer:** Competing, bespoke CAR-T cell therapies from Gilead Sciences and Bristol Myers Squibb have each demonstrated additional benefit for patients with B-cell lymphoma at an earlier stage of treatment than they’re used for currently. But is one better than the other? Results from the successful clinical trials, dubbed ZUMA-7 and TRANSFORM by Gilead and Bristol, respectively, are being presented this weekend at the annual meeting of the American Society of Hematology. Collectively, the data are likely to expand the use of these CAR-T therapies — Gilead’s Yescarta and Bristol’s Breyanzi — and deliver larger sales for both companies.

- **Stat: Mutations Tied To Blood Cancers May Protect Against Alzheimer’s:** When key mutations strike bone marrow stem cells, known as hematopoietic stem cells, your risk for a litany of diseases go up. “Heart attacks, strokes, more recently COPD, osteoporosis,” Siddhartha Jaiswal, a pathology researcher at Stanford University, rattled off. “And you’re at higher risk of blood cancers in the future. They’re the first hit on the path to cancer.” These mutations are almost universally bad, Jaiswal said in an interview with STAT. But in a new study, Jaiswal found that these same genetic changes might actually protect against Alzheimer’s disease, startling researchers who reviewed the work and raising questions as to how such pathological mutations could prevent the devastating neurodegenerative disorder.