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# Window On Washington - April 1, 2019, Vol. 3, Issue 14

Apr 01, 2019

## Outlook for This Week in the Nation's Capital

**Congress.** The House this week will continue to ramp up oversight on the Trump Administration, with the Government Reform Committee issuing subpoenas for several Administration officials regarding the development of the 2020 Census and the security clearance process for members of the President's family. The Senate this week will resume consideration of a disaster aid package that failed to pass last week after a series of parliamentary maneuvers to block Democrats from amending the bill (see more below).

**White House.** Attorney General Bill Barr sent a letter to Congress last week stating that he intends to release a public version of special counsel Robert Mueller's report in a matter of weeks. Barr stated that the White House had waived its right to an "executive privilege review" of the report, and that he will confine his redactions of the report to four well-recognized areas: classified information, privacy-protected information, information related to ongoing investigations, and grand jury information. The President resumed his repeated attacks against the media for the handling of the collusion allegations against him, and promised to keep up those attacks, despite counsel from other Republican leaders to now pivot to other issues and needs. The Justice Department's joining of a lawsuit to invalidate Obamacare dovetailed with a pivot by House Democrats last week to pivot away from Russia/Trump and more towards health care issues they think will help them in the 2020 election cycle.

**Budget & Appropriations.** The Senate last week passed a budget with significantly lower numbers than the enacted FY19 levels for defense and domestic programs, which everyone believes will be promptly "ignored", and the House Budget Committee Chairman again confirmed it was unlikely he would bring a proposed FY20 budget to the floor this coming week, or later this Spring. The Senate also remains "stuck" on the issue of a House-passed Supplemental Disaster Bill (HR 268) but will resume consideration this week. Senate Democrats are threatening to oppose the \$13 billion dollar disaster aid bill unless it includes more money for Puerto Rico, even as President Donald Trump complains that Congress is providing too much money to the island. The House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees will be busy again this week – Commerce, HHS, EPA, FEMA and HUD all have Senate hearings, and the House will hear testimony from NIH, EPA, TSA, FDA, Labor, FBI and other agencies on their FY20 requests.

## Last Week in the Nation's Capital

### CONGRESS

#### *Tax Reform*

**\$7,500 Tax Credit for GM's Electric Cars to be Phased Out:** The \$7,500 tax credit for buying electric cars made by General Motors has reached the beginning of the end, the IRS announced this week. The phaseout will start April 1 because a maximum of 200,000 vehicles per company are eligible for the credit, a sales milestone GM reached in the final calendar quarter of last year. For electric cars bought after March 31, the credit will drop in half, to \$3,750. It will ratchet down to \$1,875 on Oct. 1, remain at that level for the next two quarters, and then cease altogether after March 31, 2020. (Clark Hill Insight)

**Only Half of Voters Want Congress to Force Release of Trump's Tax Returns:** There's no groundswell among voters for Congress to force President Donald Trump to release his tax returns, according to a new POLITICO/Morning Consult poll. (Politico)

#### *Appropriations*

**Senate Panel Approves GOP Budget that Slashes Spending:** The Senate Budget Committee on Thursday approved a GOP-backed budget resolution that would allow for draconian spending cuts by reducing both defense and nondefense spending for 2020. The resolution advanced in an 11-8 vote along party lines. (The Hill)

#### *Homeland Security*

**Top House Homeland Security Democrat Fires Back at Nielsen Border Request:** House Homeland Security Committee Chairman Bennie Thompson is pushing back on Homeland Security Secretary's Kirstjen Nielsen request to Congress for legislation that would allow her department to deport Central American unaccompanied minors quickly and detain families longer. (CNN)

#### *Space/NASA & NOAA*

**Senate Reintroduces Space Frontier Act:** A bipartisan group of senators has reintroduced legislation designed to reform commercial launch and remote sensing regulations, this time without a provision that led to the bill's defeat last year in the House. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) announced March 28 the introduction of the Space Frontier Act which would among other provisions authorize extending NASA support the ISS to 2030. The bill is scheduled to be marked up by the Senate Commerce Committee during an executive session April 3 that will consider a number of other bills and nominations, including legislation on Space Weather. (Space News)

#### *Defense*

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**House Votes to Condemn Trump's Limits on Transgender Troops:** The House delivered a rebuke to President Donald Trump on Thursday by voting to condemn his administration's move to restrict transgender men and women from military service. A non-binding resolution opposing Trump's transgender ban passed 238-185. ([Military Times](#))

*Cyber*

**U.S. Senators Introduce Secure 5G and Beyond Act:** Expressing concern over the security of 5G and future telecommunications systems, a group of senior U.S. senators introduced a bill that would require President Donald Trump to maximize the security of domestic network infrastructure and that of foreign allies. The Secure 5G and Beyond Act was formally proposed by Senators John Cornyn, Richard Burr, and Mark Warner, with co-sponsors Susan Collins, Tom Cotton, Marco Rubio, and Michael Bennet. ([Venture Beat](#))

*Transportation*

**Boeing and F.A.A. Hearings: Questions Focus on 737 Certification:** Two Senate subcommittees held hearings on Boeing's 737 Max jets. Witnesses Elaine Chao, secretary of transportation, and Daniel Elwell, acting head of the FAA, answered questions about how their agencies assessed the plane's readiness to fly. ([New York Times](#))

*Natural Resources*

**Democratic Chairmen Press Interior Department on Transparency:** The chairmen of the House Oversight and Natural Resources committees ramped up pressure on the Interior Department to be more transparent, requesting that four high-ranking staff members submit to official interviews on whether the agency is circumventing official recordkeeping. ([Committee on Oversight and Reform Press Release](#))

**EXECUTIVE BRANCH**

*Health/HHS/NIH*

**New NIH Inclusion Policy Promises Better Representation of Research Participants Across the Age Spectrum:** Starting this year, a new NIH inclusion policy mandates that participants of all ages be included in human subjects research, unless there is a scientific or ethical reason for exclusion of any age category. The NIH Inclusion Across the Lifespan policy, developed in response to requirements in the 21st Century Cures Act, has been in effect since the Jan. 25, 2019, grant submission deadline, and addresses a long-standing problem of excluding older participants in clinical trials. ([National Institute on Aging](#))

**NIH May Bar Peer Reviewers Accused of Sexual Harassment:** The NIH reminded the research community last week that the agency can - and sometimes does - bar scientists accused of sexual harassment from serving as peer reviewers. The bar is lower than the standard to remove an investigator from a grant, say NIH officials, because of their concern about "the integrity of the process." Noni Byrnes, the newly appointed director of NIH's Center for Scientific Review (CSR), explained in a 25 March blog post that allegations of sexual harassment could bias a reviewer's score for a research proposal even if they are ultimately found to be innocent. ([Science Mag](#))

*Space/NASA & NOAA*

**GRAVITY Instrument Breaks New Ground In Exoplanet Imaging:** The GRAVITY instrument on ESO's Very Large Telescope Interferometer has made the first direct observation of an exoplanet using optical interferometry. This method revealed a complex exoplanetary atmosphere with clouds of iron and silicates swirling in a planet-wide storm. The technique presents unique possibilities for characterising many of the exoplanets known today. ([Space Ref](#))

**WFIRST Faces Funding Crunch:** NASA's fiscal year 2020 budget request includes no funding for the Wide Field Infrared Survey Telescope (WFIRST), the next large strategic, or flagship, astrophysics mission for the agency after the James Webb Space Telescope. The issue came up during a House Appropriations Committee hearing last week featuring NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine, and during a March 26 presentation to the National Academies' Committee on Astronomy and Astrophysics discussing resources needed to keep the mission on track for a launch in 2025. ([Space News](#))

*Defense/DOD*

**Pentagon Transfers \$1B to Help Build Trump's Wall:** The Pentagon has moved ahead with its plan to transfer \$1 billion from its accounts to help build President Trump's border wall, despite congressional backlash and the possibility that the Defense Department will lose its ability to move dollars between accounts in the future. ([The Hill](#))

**Shanahan's Nomination to Head Pentagon on Ice:** Patrick Shanahan's expected promotion to permanently head the Defense Department has stalled amid an ethics investigation and a series of unimpressive public performances, according to four people with knowledge of internal White House discussions. ([Politico](#))

*Trade*

**China will Continue to Suspend Extra Tariffs on U.S. Vehicles, Auto Parts:** China's State Council said on Sunday that the country would continue to suspend additional tariffs on U.S. vehicles and auto parts after April 1, in a goodwill gesture following a U.S. decision to delay tariff hikes on Chinese

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imports. ([Reuters](#))

*Housing/HUD*

**HUD Charges Facebook with Racial Discrimination in Targeted Housing Ads:** Seeking damages and unspecified relief for harm caused, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development said here in its civil charge that Facebook also restricted who could see housing-related ads based on national origin, religion, familial status, sex and disability. ([Reuters](#))

*Justice/DOJ*

**Barr Expects to Release Nearly 400-Page Mueller Report by Mid-April:** Attorney General William Barr told lawmakers on Friday that he expects to have a public version of special counsel Robert Mueller's report ready for release by mid-April and that President Trump has deferred to him to decide what makes it into the redacted document. ([The Hill](#))

**Trump's Pick for No. 3 Position at DOJ Withdraws:** President Trump's nominee for the third highest position at the Department of Justice withdrew herself from consideration Thursday. Instead of becoming the associate attorney general, Jessie Liu will instead become chairwoman of the Attorney General's Advisory Committee of United States Attorneys. ([The Hill](#))

*Labor & Workforce*

**New GAO Report: Department of Labor Should Assess Efforts to Coordinate Services Across Programs:** Federal agencies administer employment and training programs to help job seekers find and get work – a previous GAO report in 2011 identified 47 such programs, there are 3 now. GAO found that spending for these programs has decreased and that multiple programs provide similar services, often to similar groups of people. While agencies have tried to manage this overlap by trying to coordinate their programs, they generally don't know whether their efforts are working, leading the GAO to recommend that the Department of Labor develop a strategic plan for evaluating these programs that includes assessing what federal agencies are doing to coordinate them. ([Gao.gov](#))

**The Child Care Crisis Is Keeping Women Out of the Workforce:** A new report from the Center for American Progress examines the issue of many families with young children having to make a choice between spending a significant portion of their income on child care, finding a cheaper, but potentially lower-quality care option, or leaving the workforce altogether to become a full-time caregiver. Whether due to high cost, limited availability, or inconvenient program hours, child care challenges are driving parents out of the workforce at an alarming rate. ([Center for American Progress](#))

*Energy*

**DOE Yanks Huawei, ZTE Tech:** An Energy Department official said today that the agency stopped using products from Chinese telecom companies Huawei and ZTE. Though DOE's use of the companies' products was "very limited", policymakers have been concerned about the close ties the two companies have to the Chinese government and fear they could be leveraged to spy on Americans. Last year, Congress banned federal agencies and contractors from using Huawei and ZTE technology.

**Trump Administration Authorized Nuclear Energy Companies to Share Technological Information with Saudi Arabia:** The Trump administration has kept secret seven authorizations it has issued since November 2017 allowing U.S. nuclear energy companies to share sensitive technological information with Saudi Arabia, even though the kingdom has not yet agreed to anti-proliferation terms required to construct a pair of U.S.-designed civilian nuclear power plants. ([Washington Post](#))

**U.S. Energy Secretary Unsure if Saudi Nuclear Approvals Came after Khashoggi Killing:** U.S. Energy Secretary Rick Pery told lawmakers last Thursday he did not know whether any of the approvals he authorized for U.S. companies to sell nuclear power technology to Saudi Arabia were made after the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in October last year. ([Reuters](#))

*Homeland Security*

**Trump Threatens to Close 'Large Sections' of US-Mexico Border Next Week Over Illegal Immigration:** President Trump threatened to close large parts of the U.S.-Mexico border next week if America's southern neighbor does not "immediately" stop illegal immigration. ([CNBC](#))

*Education/DOE*

**'I Have Overridden My People': Trump Says He will Keep Special Olympics Funded, Undercutting DeVos:** President Trump said he would jettison a proposal to slash funding for the Special Olympics, undercutting Education Secretary Betsy DeVos and the budget proposal he signed. ([USA Today](#))

*FEC*

**FEC Approves Three Advisory Opinions, Two Audit Division Recommendation Memoranda:** At its open meeting on March 28, the Federal Election Commission approved three advisory opinions. It approved two Audit Division recommendation memoranda prior to the meeting. ([FEC Press Release](#))