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# Window On Washington - June 3, 2019, Vol. 3, Issue 23

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

**Congress.** The Congress returns from its brief Memorial Day recess, but the House and Senate continue to march to the beat of their own drummers. The coming weeks will test the ability of Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader McConnell to find common ground on legislative priorities that could pass in the divided Congress and earn the President's support, a short list which may include prescription drug pricing reform, infrastructure and budget and appropriations related matters. The first order of business for the House is approving the Senate-passed disaster supplemental appropriations bill, so the President can sign it later this week. Democrats also went on the attack against Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell during the recess calling him a "hypocrite", after the Kentucky Republican said that Republicans would fill a Supreme Court seat in 2020 if one became open, potentially setting up another heated battle.

**White House.** The White House is bracing for another tough week upon Congress' return, after comments Robert Mueller made last week regarding his report and decision to not formally recommend prosecution for obstruction of justice deviated from the Attorney General's understanding that this was Mueller's job, rather than leaving the matter to Congress. On Sunday, House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn said he believes President Trump will eventually be impeached, but cautioned that Democrats need to first lay the groundwork and educate the public on the process. The President also put his own party again in the awkward position of having to support or oppose newly proposed tariffs, this time against goods from Mexico, as the President believes the country is doing little to help the US address a flood of immigrants from other countries to the south of Mexico. Lastly, Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan confirmed that he will not challenge Donald Trump in a 2020 GOP primary, leaving the president's Republican critics with few options to prevent his re-nomination.

**Budget & Appropriations.** The House Appropriations Committee this week will mark up the Financial Services, Agriculture, Transportation/HUD and Homeland Security bills in either sub or full Committee. The House Majority Leader also recently announced that the House will begin consideration of FY 2020 appropriations on Wednesday, June 12th and will debate and vote on appropriations bills for the remainder of the month. The Senate Appropriations Committee on the other hand has still not announced a tentative markup schedule. The Windows also notes the passing of recent past Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Senator Thad Cochran of Mississippi, on May 30.

## Last Week in the Nation's Capital

### CONGRESS

#### Health

**Breaking Down the Senate Draft Bill on Patient Healthcare Costs:** Just prior to the recess, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee released a discussion draft on legislation that would address healthcare costs, patient financial responsibility, surprise medical bills, and public health. The Lower Health Care Costs Act of 2019 aims to improve the overall patient experience of care while cutting down on out-of-pocket patient spending. The HELP Committee will be accepting public comments on the discussion draft which must be submitted by 5 p.m. on June 5, 2019. ([Patient Engagement](#))

#### Space, NASA & NOAA

**Bridenstine Says Debate Only Beginning Over Funding 2024 Return to the Moon:** NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine said the administration's request to add \$1.6 billion to the agency's 2020 budget to start work on the Artemis lunar program was not "dead on arrival" despite a lack of action on it by House appropriators. Bridenstine argued that the budget amendment, a down payment on the overall, but undefined, cost of returning astronauts to the moon by 2024, had bipartisan support but arrived too late for House appropriators to consider in their bill. ([Space News](#))

#### Education

**Cummings Accuses Education Dept of Blocking Probe into Attempted Removal of Internal Watchdog:** House Oversight and Reform Chairman Elijah Cummings (D-Md.) has reportedly accused the Department of Education of blocking an investigation from his committee into the attempted removal of the agency's acting independent watchdog. ([The Hill](#))

### EXECUTIVE BRANCH

#### Health/HHS/NIH

**Combating Undue Foreign Influence at U.S. Research Institutions:** Academic research labs across the country are taking steps to protect their intellectual property after the NIH warned of data breaches and shadow labs. Here's what you need to know. ([AAMC News](#))

#### Labor & Workforce

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**Mulvaney Tightens Grip on Labor Chief After Trump Allies Grumble:** President Trump's acting chief of staff, Mick Mulvaney, has seized power over the Labor Department's rulemaking process out of frustration with the pace of deregulation under Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta, according to current and former department officials and other people who communicate with the administration. ([Bloomberg Law](#))

*Transportation/DOT*

**Transit and Transportation Agencies Announce Formation of National Automated Bus Consortium:** An association of transit and transportation agencies has formed the Automated Bus Consortium (Consortium), a collaboration designed to investigate the feasibility of implementing pilot automated bus projects across the United States. ([AP](#))

**Transportation Secretary Failed to Sever Financial Ties to Construction Company:** Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao failed last year to cash out her stock options in one of the nation's largest suppliers of highway construction materials, despite a promise she had made to do so in a signed ethics agreement when she joined the Trump administration. ([New York Times](#))

*Space, NASA & NOAA*

**NASA Just Picked These 3 Companies to Build Private Moon Landers for Lunar Science:** NASA has chosen the first commercial companies that will carry the agency's equipment to the moon during its lead-up to a human landing in 2024: Astrobotic, Intuitive Machines and Orbit Beyond. The companies will build moon landers to ferry NASA science experiments and technology demonstrations to the lunar surface. Those flights will be the first step of the agency's ambitious Artemis program to land humans on the moon in 2024. ([Space.com](#))

**Without a Champion, Europa Lander Falls to NASA's Back Burner:** After years of being pushed by the U.S. Congress to follow the Europa Clipper, a spacecraft that will survey Jupiter's frozen moon, with a lander, NASA has begun to push back. The agency disclosed last week that the lander mission, if it happens, will now come no earlier than 2030, 5 years later than Congress mandated. And the agency will be challenged to meet the 2023 launch date set for the Clipper. ([Science Mag](#))

**FY18 Federal Government Contracting:** The Government Accountability Office's recently released [infographic](#) shows details on how federal contracting dollars are spent across the federal government—including which agencies obligated the most funds, what they bought, and whether the contracts were competed. ([GAO's WatchBlog](#))

*EPA*

**EPA Ends E15 Restrictions Ahead of Deadline:** The Environmental Protection Agency is lifting restrictions on summer sales of E15, checking off a top policy priority for corn growers and the biofuel industry but kicking off a new chapter as the battle over the higher ethanol blend likely heads to the courts. Under the rule released Friday, fueling stations across the country will be able to sell E15, a blend of vehicle fuel with 15 percent ethanol, as consumers hit the road for the summer driving season. The rule also modifies regulations for the biofuel credit market, changing the way Renewable Identification Numbers can be held or reported. Most gasoline on sale now contains about 10 percent ethanol. ([Agri Pulse](#))

*Defense/DOD*

**Outrage Over McCain Incident Adds to Shanahan's Hurdles:** Acting Defense Secretary Pat Shanahan's quest for the Pentagon's top job faced a new obstacle Thursday amid outrage over an aborted attempt to hide the name of the destroyer USS John S. McCain during President Donald Trump's visit to Japan. ([Politico](#))

*USDA*

**USDA Announces Loans to Improve Rural Electric Infrastructure and Upgrade Energy Efficiency:** Acting Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development Joel Baxley announced that USDA is providing \$858 million in loans to upgrade rural electric systems in 17 states. The funding includes \$64 million to finance smart grid technologies that improve system operations and monitor grid security. ([USDA Press Release](#))

*Trade*

**Trump Vows Rapid, High Tariffs on Mexico Unless Illegal Immigration Ends:** President Donald Trump, responding to a surge of illegal immigrants across the southern border, vowed last Thursday to impose a tariff on all goods coming from Mexico, starting at 5% and ratcheting much higher until the flow of people ceases. ([Reuters](#))

**Cyber Command Appoints New No. 2 Amid Growing Battle With Foreign Hackers:** The head of U.S. Cyber Command has tapped the organization's chief of staff to be his new deputy, filling a critical vacancy as the command looks to bolster operations to defend the 2020 elections from foreign interference. ([Politico](#))

*DOJ*

**DOJ, Special Counsel Say there is 'No Conflict' on Mueller, Barr Statements About Obstruction Inquiry:** The Justice Department and special counsel's office say there is "no conflict" between statements made by Attorney General William Barr and special counsel Robert Mueller about the role

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that Justice Department guidelines stating not to indict a sitting president played in Mueller's obstruction inquiry. ([The Hill](#))

*Homeland Security/DHS*

**DHS Watchdog Finds 'Dangerous Overcrowding' at Texas Border Patrol Facility:** A Department of Homeland Security (DHS) watchdog has found "dangerous overcrowding" and "standing room only conditions" at a Border Patrol processing facility in El Paso, Texas. ([The Hill](#))

*Education*

**51 Attorneys General Urge DeVos: Erase Disabled Veterans' Student Debt:** The attorneys general of 51 states and territories on Friday asked Education Secretary Betsy DeVos to stop requiring that disabled veterans fill out paperwork to become eligible for federal student loan forgiveness. Instead, they want DeVos to exercise her power to automatically cancel the debt. ([Politico](#))

*FEC*

**Hotel Bills, Dues: Regulators Question Whether Ex-Lawmakers are Using Donors' Money for Personal Expenses:** It's been an open secret in Washington for years: Political careers may end, but some former members of Congress keep their campaign accounts alive long after they have left Capitol Hill, using the unspent money to pay relatives and underwrite an array of expenses that crop up in their post-congressional lives. ([CNN](#))

*Energy/DOE*

**DOE, Utilities Seek the Ultimate Shield Against Hackers:** The CES-21 program is the first step toward a much more challenging goal on the security frontier. That's to equip computers at utilities and at big manufacturing plants with artificial intelligence that would give them the capability to automatically detect and defeat hackers, with minimal human help. ([E&E News](#))