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Outlook for This Week in the Nation's Capital

Congress: The House and Senate return for one final week of legislative business before the Memorial Day recess week, with the disaster supplemental appropriations package still hanging in the balance. House Democrats have another busy week ahead with more key priority bills ready to come to the House floor, while Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has finally committed to voting on disaster supplemental appropriations legislation in the Senate, with or without a bipartisan deal, to at least get to a conference with House negotiators to reconcile the bills — if not something the House can pass outright. Speaker Pelosi has also signaled that the House is ready to accept some additional funding for the crisis at the border as part of this deal, in order to get additional emergency funding moving to California for wildfire damage, Puerto Rico for hurricane rebuilding, and to address severe flooding in the Midwest and Texas, so a deal may finally be in sight after months of delay.

White House: Michigan Rep. Justin Amash became the first Republican lawmaker to declare that President Donald Trump committed impeachable offenses and that Attorney General William Barr “deliberately misrepresented” special counsel Robert Mueller’s report, causing the President to immediately fire back, as is his way. He continued over the weekend to tout good economic numbers, despite increasing headwinds caused by his increasing tariff war with China. The situations in Iran and Venezuela continue to preoccupy the White House on the international stage, and the conflict with the Democratic House of Representatives continues to intensify, as the administration on Friday again rejected House Democrats’ subpoena for the President’s tax returns, pushing the two sides closer to a major court fight. The President also called for Republicans to be ‘united’ in the midst of a wave of new abortion laws signed by Republican governors, in what increasingly seems to be a significant 2020 campaign issue.

Budget & Appropriations: The top four congressional leaders of both parties are expected to meet with White House officials this week to discuss a two-year budget deal, a pair of sources confirmed Friday, talks that are needed as deadlines to avoid another government shutdown and raise the debt ceiling loom this fall. Acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin are expected to attend. The House Appropriations Committee continues to work at a breakneck pace, with multiple FY20 bills released or marked up this past week – Energy and Water and the Commerce/Justice/Science bills should be marked up and passed in full Committee this week, and Agriculture and THUD will be marked up in House subcommittees next Thursday, leaving only the tricky Financial Services and Homeland Security bills yet to be acted upon. The Senate still expects to begin marking up its FY20 bills after the coming recess in early June.

Last Week in the Nation's Capital

CONGRESS

Health

Senators Introduce Surprise Medical Bill Ban With Arbitration: A bipartisan group of senators released legislation last Thursday to ban surprise medical bills, and landed on arbitration as a final resort if hospitals, specialty physicians or insurers aren't happy with the pay rate proposed for out-of-network treatment. The new bill from Sens. Bill Cassidy (R-La.) and Michael Bennet (D-Colo.) has been in the works nearly a year. ([Modern Healthcare](#))

Passes Drug Pricing Bills Paired with Obamacare Fixes: House Democrats last week passed the session’s first legislation aimed at lowering drug prices, as the party looks to solidify its political advantage on a key issue for voters ahead of the 2020 elections. The health care vote — the House’s second in two weeks — came over bitter protests from Republicans, who accused Democratic leaders of politicizing once-bipartisan drug price proposals by pairing them with polarizing measures to strengthen Obamacare, and who pointed out that the bill is unlikely to survive the GOP-controlled Senate. ([Politico](#))

Defense

House Appropriations Panel Passes Defense Bill: On Wednesday, the House Appropriations defense subcommittee approved by voice vote its version of the FY 2020 defense spending bill. ([Inside Defense](#))

Full Senate Briefing on Iran Scheduled for Tuesday: The full Senate is scheduled to be briefed Tuesday on the Trump administration’s plans in Iran. ([The Hill](#))

Elizabeth Warren Introduces Bill to Curb Defense Lobbying: Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) introduced a bill that would overhaul the rules for lobbying and employment of former military members who join defense firms. The new rule would require former high-ranking DOD members to wait at least four years before joining defense companies and ban DOD members from owning defense stocks. ([CBS News](#))

Tax

IRS Bringing in Outside Contractor on Review of ‘Free File’ Program: IRS Commissioner Charles Rettig says the agency is engaging an outside contractor to review its “Free File” program, and that he hopes the review is completed in the next several months. ([The Hill](#))

Grassley, Wyden Try to Jump-Start Tax Extender Revival With Task Forces: The heads of the Senate Finance Committee are trying to jump-start efforts to revive tax extenders by creating task forces to study the breaks, they announced on Thursday. A half-dozen groups comprised of committee members will examine areas like energy, health and cost recovery.

Transportation

Senate Commerce Chair to Renew Push for Regs on Self-Driving Vehicles: Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Roger Wicker (R-MS) announced last week that his panel plans to “deal with autonomous vehicles” during this Congress, and that he will specifically push for previously failed legislation that would create a federal framework for the safety and security of self-driving cars. ([The Hill](#))

Cyber

Senators Question How To Roll Out 5G Without Chinese Technology: With the imminent arrival of 5G to more US cities, several United States senators expressed concern over how to roll out the new technology without the help of Chinese equipment makers during a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on Tuesday. ([CNN](#))

Labor & Workforce

Congress will Reconsider \$1.1 Billion 'Smart Cities and Communities Act': Three Democratic members of Congress have reintroduced the Smart Cities and Communities Act, which would authorize \$1.1 billion in federal support over five years for local technology initiatives. Rep. Suzan DelBene from Washington, a co-sponsor, said in a press release the legislation would allocate funding to coordinate federal “smart city” programs, provide assistance to local programs, support workforce development and foster collaboration and security measures within smart cities. ([State Scoop](#))

Space, NASA & NOAA

House Appropriators Take a Pass on NASA Budget Amendment: The House Appropriations Committee released a spending bill May 16 that adds more than \$1 billion to NASA’s original request but offers little in the way of additional funding for exploration priorities included in the agency’s recent budget amendment. The House’s version of the FY20 Commerce/Justice/Science bill would provide NASA with \$22.32 billion, nearly \$1.3 billion above NASA’s original request and \$820 million more than what NASA received for fiscal year 2019. The bill, though, largely ignores a budget amendment submitted by the White House May 13. That sought \$1.6 billion in additional NASA funding for 2020, primarily to start work on lunar landers and accelerate development of the Space Launch System and Orion. ([Space News](#))

House Science Committee Susses Out Space Weather ‘Swim Lanes’: The House Science Committee’s Environment Subcommittee held a hearing on April 26 to examine the current state of research, forecasting, and preparedness efforts related to space weather. Members stressed the importance of improving the nation’s ability to predict space weather phenomena — such as coronal mass ejections (CMEs) and solar winds — in light of their potential to wreak havoc on critical infrastructure, including communications, transportation, and energy systems. ([AIP](#))

Justice

Key House Democrat Plans to Take 'Enforcement Action' Against Justice Department: House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff said Thursday he will take “enforcement action” against the Justice Department for not complying with his subpoena for counterintelligence information from special counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation. ([CNN](#))

U.S. Senate Confirms Jeffrey Rosen as No. 2 Justice Department Official: The Senate last Thursday confirmed Jeffrey Rosen as the No. 2 official at the Justice Department, after Attorney General William Barr recommended Rosen for the job to President Trump. ([Reuters](#))

Energy

House Energy Panel Advances \$4B in Cyber, Energy Efficiency Bills: Last week, a House Energy and Commerce subcommittee advanced ten bills that would authorize \$4 billion in new Department of Energy (DOE) spending on energy efficiency and build out the agency’s cybersecurity responsibilities. All of the bills were approved by voice vote, including the four bipartisan cybersecurity measures. [H.R. 362 \(116\)](#) would create a new DOE assistant secretary position responsible for coordinating preparedness and response to cyber and physical attacks on energy infrastructure. [H.R. 370 \(116\)](#) would require DOE to prepare for cyber or physical attacks on pipelines and LNG terminals, and coordinate an emergency response when needed.

House Appropriations Committee Releases FY 2020 Energy and Water Bill: The draft fiscal year 2020 Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies funding bill includes \$37.1 billion for the Department of Energy, an increase of \$1.4 billion above the fiscal year 2019 level. ([Daily Energy Insider](#))

Environment

Democrats Advance Spending Bills Boosting EPA, Defying Trump: Democrats passed the two appropriations bills — interior and environment, as well as energy and water — by voice votes in their respective subcommittees. They are expected to be taken up by the full Appropriations Committee as soon as this week and taken to the House floor in June. ([The Hill](#))

Immigration

Trump Taunts Democrats with His Immigration Plan: President Trump predicted Friday there's a "good chance" that congressional Democrats decide to work with him to pass his recently unveiled immigration plan before next year's elections, despite every indication to the contrary. ([Politico](#))

Trump's Immigration Push Faces Capitol Hill Buzzsaw: President Trump's push for a long-stalled deal on immigration is running straight into a dead end on Capitol Hill. Trump's plan would try to break the years-long stalemate by overhauling the legal immigration system and giving preference for green cards to immigrants based on job skills rather than family reunification. ([The Hill](#))

Homeland Security

Senate Homeland Security Committee Advances Bill to Strengthen DHS Counterterrorism Coordination: The Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee advanced this week a bill intended to bolster counterterrorism efforts under an updated Counterterrorism Advisory Board. ([Homeland Preparedness News](#))

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Health/HHS/NIH

NIH Study Finds Heavily Processed Foods Cause Overeating and Weight Gain: People eating ultra-processed foods ate more calories and gained more weight than when they ate a minimally processed diet, according to results from a National Institutes of Health study. The difference occurred even though meals provided to the volunteers in both the ultra-processed and minimally processed diets had the same number of calories and macronutrients. ([NIH.gov](#))

Labor & Workforce

Uber Drivers Are Contractors, Labor Board's Top Lawyer Says: Uber drivers aren't legal "employees" for the purposes of federal labor laws, the U.S. labor board general counsel's office said in an advisory memo released May 14. The National Labor Relations Board's advice memo, dated April 16, means the agency's general counsel will take the position that workers for companies such as Uber are excluded from federal protections for workplace organizing activities, like trying to form or join a union. In practice, that means Uber workers are without a federal forum if they want to unionize or file what's known as unfair labor practice charges. ([Bloomberg](#))

Trade

Seeking New Trade Deals, Trump Reconsiders Tariffs on Metal, Auto Industries: President Trump scaled back on the global trade war on Friday, lifting tariffs on metal imports from Canada and Mexico and delaying for six months a decision to impose tariffs on automobiles from Europe, Japan, and other countries. Canada and Mexico reportedly agreed to remove all retaliatory tariffs on U.S. goods, in turn. ([The Week](#))

Space, NASA & NOAA

NASA Selects 11 Companies for Lunar Lander Studies: NASA announced May 16 it has selected 11 companies to begin studies and initial prototype development of portions of lunar landers the agency hopes can help it meet its 2024 human landing goal. The awards are part of NASA's Next Space Technologies for Exploration Partnerships (NextSTEP) series of broad agency announcements that support public-private partnerships to develop technologies needed for NASA's exploration plans. Companies receiving these awards are required to make their own contributions in addition to NASA's combined funding of \$45.5 million. ([Space News](#))

Education

Education Department Hinders Policing of Student Loans, Consumer Agency Says: The head of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau says the Education Department is impeding access to information that regulators need to oversee the nation's largest student loan servicing companies. ([Politico](#))

DOJ

Justice Department Seeks to Appeal Emoluments Case Against Trump: The Justice Department moved on Tuesday to challenge a federal district judge's ruling last month that allowed congressional Democrats to proceed with a lawsuit claiming that President Trump had violated the Constitution by profiting from his businesses while in office. ([The New York Times](#))

Interior

Interior Announces Todd Willens as Chief of Staff: Mr. Willens will oversee and directly manage the Office of the Secretary. In this role, he will advise the Secretary on policy development and coordination internally, with other agencies, and with the White House. Mr. Willens will represent the Secretary as a Board of Director on the Presidio Trust and as an Ex Officio Member on the National Trust for Historic Preservation. ([DOI Press Release](#))