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Outlook for This Week in the Nation's Capital

Congress. The House and Senate are not in session this week. Apart from the Supreme Court nomination hearings, tomorrow the House Oversight Subcommittee will hold a hearing on taxpayer fairness, and on Thursday the House Select Intelligence Committee will hold a hearing on stopping online misinformation and the House Natural Resources Water, Oceans, and Wildlife Subcommittee will hold a hearing on coastal community federal grantmaking inequities.

Supreme Court. The Senate Judiciary Committee is set to hold confirmation hearings for Judge Amy Coney Barrett's Supreme Court nomination starting today, which will continue throughout the week.

Next COVID Package Negotiations. White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin wrote in a letter yesterday to members of the House and Senate that lawmakers should pass legislation to redirect unused funding. The letter follows comments from White House Economic Adviser Larry Kudlow yesterday that coronavirus relief negotiations are not yet dead and that Secretary Mnuchin may offer a proposal priced higher than House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's (D-CA) most recent \$2.2 trillion package. Kudlow's remarks come after President Trump abruptly put a stop to the negotiations last week before changing his stance and backing a \$1.8 trillion package from the White House. Both Speaker Pelosi and Senate Republicans rejected the White House's proposal, making it increasingly unlikely that a COVID-19 package will be signed into law before the election. Many Senate Republicans continue to vocalize their concerns about the spending levels pushed for by both Speaker Pelosi and the White House.

2020 Elections. Former Vice President Joe Biden will participate in an ABC News town hall on Thursday, and President Donald Trump may participate in an NBC News town hall Thursday as well after the Commission on Presidential Debates canceled the planned Oct. 15 debate since the President said he would not participate in a virtual debate. The next, and last, presidential debate remains set for Oct. 22.

Last Week in the Nation's Capital

CONGRESS

Budget & Appropriations

McConnell Says Coronavirus Relief Deal Unlikely Before Election: Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) signaled last Friday that he does not expect Congress and the White House to reach a deal on a coronavirus package before the elections, citing steep political headwinds. ([The Hill](#))

Health

House Democrats Seek to Block Funds for 'Defeat Despair' COVID Ads: House Democrats overseeing the Trump administration's coronavirus response will introduce a largely symbolic bill intended to limit the administration's ability to spend federal funds on certain coronavirus-related advertisements before the election, according to a draft shared first with POLITICO. ([Politico](#))

Senate Republicans Rip New White House Coronavirus Proposal: Senate Republicans on Saturday offered fierce pushback against the administration's latest coronavirus relief proposal during a call with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows. ([The Hill](#))

Labor & Workforce

Meadows and Mnuchin Urge Repurposing PPP Money Amid Stimulus Wrangling: Top Trump administration officials are calling on lawmakers to pass legislation to redirect unused funding from a small-business lifeline, the latest salvo in a week of twists and turns in talks between the White House and congressional leaders on a new round of coronavirus stimulus. ([Politico](#))

Banking & Housing

Advocates Plead for Housing Aid as Eviction Cliff Looms: Roughly 32 percent of U.S. households believe they will face eviction or foreclosure within the next 60 days, and another 6.8 percent said they do not expect to pay their next monthly rent or mortgage payment on time, according to a Census Bureau survey released last Wednesday. David Dworkin, president and CEO of the National Housing Conference, estimated that it will take \$25 billion to \$35 billion to cover the rent due to landlords. ([The Hill](#))

Womack to Replace Graves on Financial Services Subcommittee: Rep. Steve Womack (R-AR) is set to take over as the top Republican on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government, replacing outgoing ranking member Rep. Tom Graves (R-GA). ([The Hill](#))

Transportation

Pelosi Says No Standalone Help for Airlines Without Broader COVID-19 Aid: Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) said last Thursday that Democrats will not

accept a piecemeal approach to coronavirus relief that benefits only a sliver of suffering Americans without assurances from the White House that President Trump will support a much larger comprehensive aid package. The previous week, a proposed standalone airline aid was prevented from advancing to a vote in the House. ([The Hill](#))

Space/NASA & NOAA

Science Committee's Kendra Horn Still Hopeful for NASA Authorization This Year, Discusses NASA's Lunar Plans: A bipartisan bill cleared Rep. Kendra Horn's (D-OK) space subcommittee in January, but further action was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The House bill has many differences from a Senate version that is also awaiting action as the clock ticks down on the 116th Congress, but Rep. Horn remains optimistic a late deal may emerge. She also discussed her ongoing concerns about NASA's Artemis mission plans and lack of additional program and budget detail she has requested. ([Space Policy Online](#))

Defense

Democrats Face Internal 'Fight' on Defense Spending, Says HASC Chairman Smith: Instead of slashing next year's \$740 billion defense budget, as some progressives want, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee Adam Smith (D-WA) is pushing "a rational Democratic, progressive national security strategy." That stance seems to align Rep. Smith with his party's pragmatic standard-bearer, Joe Biden, who's said he doesn't foresee major defense cuts if elected. ([Defense News](#))

Homeland Security & Immigration

5 Hysterectomies Referred by ICE Center, DHS Tells Congress: Acting DHS chief Chad Wolf disclosed the details in answers to lawmakers over whistleblower allegations of medical neglect. ([Roll Call](#))

Judiciary/Justice

Congress Releases Blockbuster Tech Antitrust Report: The House Judiciary Committee's 449-page report criticizes tech companies for buying competitors, preferencing their own services, and holding outsized power over smaller businesses that use their platforms. ([The Verge](#))

Read Judge Barrett's Opening Remarks: Judge Amy Coney Barrett will tell senators today that judges "should not try" to set policy as her Supreme Court nomination hearings begin, according to a copy of her remarks obtained by The Hill yesterday. ([The Hill](#))

Cyber

Cybersecurity and the 117th Congress: Congress has its hands full and as the agenda for the coming years is only getting more crowded, and experts are pointing out that it must improve its agility in order to pass meaningful cybersecurity legislation, as presently approximately eighty different congressional committees and subcommittees can claim jurisdiction over at least some dimension of cybersecurity policy. ([Atlantic Council](#))

Agriculture

More than 60 Democrats Ask Feds to Reconsider Tongass Logging Plan: More than 60 Democrats are asking USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue to reconsider a plan that would open up previously protected parts of the Tongass National Forest to logging. The Forest Service issued a final environmental impact statement (FEIS) last month laying out its intention to open up more than 9 million Tongass acres to the timber industry. ([The Hill](#))

Environment & Interior

Democrats Allege EPA Plans to Withhold Funding from 'Anarchist' Cities: Senate Environmental and Public Works Committee Ranking Member Tom Carper (D-DE) is warning that the EPA plans to withhold funds to clean contaminated land and drinking water sources in Seattle, Portland, New York, and Washington, D.C. citing a directive from President Trump to withhold federal funds from "anarchist" jurisdictions. ([The Hill](#))

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Budget & Appropriations

Larry Kudlow Says Economic Recovery Is Not 'Dependent' on a Stimulus Package, Contradicting Pleas from Fed: White House Economic Advisor Larry Kudlow said yesterday that he doesn't think an economic recovery is "dependent" on passing the next coronavirus stimulus package, contrary to the guidance put out by the Federal Reserve. ([Business Insider](#))

Trump Raises Coronavirus Stimulus Offer to \$1.8 Trillion, Then Says He Wants Bigger Bill than Dems or GOP: The White House last Friday took a new coronavirus stimulus offer to Democrats with a price tag of around \$1.8 trillion as the sides work to strike a deal before the 2020 election. ([CNBC](#))

Health/HHS/NIH

HHS Threatens to Withhold Federal Funding from Hospitals that Fail to Report Coronavirus Data: HHS is threatening to withhold U.S. funding from hospitals that fail to comply with federal requirements on reporting data about COVID-19 and influenza patients, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid

Services Administrator Seema Verma announced last Tuesday. ([CNBC](#))

Health Officials Scrambling to Produce Trump's 'Last-Minute' Drug Cards by Election Day: Caught by surprise by President Donald Trump's promise to deliver drug-discount cards to seniors, health officials are scrambling to get the nearly \$8 billion plan done by Election Day, according to five officials and draft documents obtained by POLITICO. ([Politico](#))

HHS Whistleblower Rick Bright Resigns from Government: Rick Bright, the federal vaccine chief-turned-whistleblower who was reassigned to NIH and subsequently criticized the Trump administration's pandemic response, has left the federal government. ([Politico](#))

Labor & Workforce

First-Time Jobless Claims Rose to 840,000 Last Week vs 825,000 Estimated: The number of people who filed for first-time unemployment benefits reached 840,000 last week, according to data released Thursday by the Department of Labor. Economists surveyed by Dow Jones had forecast claims would fall to 825,000. ([NBC News](#))

Trump's Workplace Watchdog Assailed for Lenient Penalties on COVID Safety Violators: The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has received 10,485 complaints and referrals about COVID-19 risks at workplaces and closed 8,702 of them during the pandemic. But in these cases – some involving companies worth millions—the agency hasn't proposed a single penalty greater than \$30,000 for coronavirus-related risks. ([Politico](#))

Department of Education

DeVos Pledges Use of 'Bully Pulpit' to Urge School Reopening: DeVos said on a Zoom event hosted by the Pacific Research Institute that she and President Donald Trump have been "very consistent" about the need to reopen schools for in-person learning "in every possible situation." ([Politico](#))

Banking & Housing/HUD

Fed's Jerome Powell Calls for More Economic Aid: Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell urged Congress to provide another round of pandemic relief last Tuesday, saying it's better to do too much than too little. ([NPR](#))

SBA, Treasury Simplify Forgiveness Process on Small PPP Loans: The Treasury Department and the Small Business Administration released a simplified forgiveness application for Paycheck Protection Program loans under \$50,000. ([Roll Call](#))

Transportation/DOT

Secretary Elaine Chao: Long-Term Plan Needed for US Infrastructure: Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao spoke last week and said the nation's lawmakers must take a long-range view of addressing the country's pressing infrastructure needs, and do the work needed to craft a funding measure more far-reaching and comprehensive than the one-year highway bill extension that recently advanced, and suggesting that Trump would prioritize one if reelected. ([Transport Topics](#))

Trade

U.S. Trade Deficit Widens to \$67.1 Billion in August, a 14-year High: The politically sensitive deficit in the trade of goods with China fell 6.7% to \$26.4 billion. ([CNBC](#))

Space/NASA & NOAA

Space Force Considers Merging Cape Canaveral With Kennedy Space Center: After numerous recent scheduling delays and issues with military, NASA, and commercial launches, General John William "Jay" Raymond, the Chief of Space Operations for the Space Force, is considering numerous options for the "Range of the Future" concept in Florida. One of the ideas the Space Force is considering to increase access to launch site space is to merge its historic Cape Canaveral facility with NASA's Kennedy Space Center under a single spaceport authority. ([Ars Technica](#))

POLITICO Pro Q&A with Brig. Gen. Steven Butow, DIU Space Portfolio Director: Being able to launch cheaply and quickly into geostationary orbit will open the door to building and servicing vehicles in space, said Brig. Gen. Steven Butow, the director of the space portfolio at the Defense Innovation Unit. The office was established in 2015 to bridge the gap between the Pentagon and industry to quickly bring commercial technology into the military. ([Politico Space](#))

Defense/DOD

Pentagon's Joint Chiefs in Quarantine After Coast Guard Officer Tests Positive: Most members of the Pentagon's Joint Chiefs of Staff are quarantining at home after Adm. Charles Ray, the vice commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, tested positive for COVID-19, the military said last Tuesday. ([NPR](#))

Pentagon Debuts Yet Another Plan to Speed Up Weapons Buys: The latest plan to overhaul the Defense Department's hidebound systems for procuring weapons, goods, and services is underway, with an emphasis on speed from design to fielding, as well as cutting maintenance costs. The new plan, called the Adaptive Acquisition Framework (AAF) is intended to bring about the "most transformational change to acquisition policy in years, perhaps

decades," said Ellen Lord, the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment. ([Military](#))

COVID-19 Throwing a Wrench in Defense Health Agency Transition Plans: COVID-19 has the DHA checking its math on some of the biggest reforms it's conducting within the Military Health System and may derail some of those efforts, including a plan to offload about 200,000 TRICARE beneficiaries from treatment at military clinics, and sending them to private practitioners in the local community. ([Federal News Network](#))

Find Out Where Trump and Biden Stand on Defense and National Security Issues: Defense News' Aaron Mehta and Joe Gould summarize the positions of the two candidates on major defense policy and spending issues, and the potential changes that would occur under a Biden Administration. ([Defense News](#))

DHS & Immigration

Trump Administration to Impose New Rules Targeting H-1B Visas: The rules, which will go into effect in December, would heighten requirements for businesses that hire foreign workers on H-1B visas. The changes may be challenged in court. ([The Hill](#))

Judiciary/DOJ

DOJ Bans Use of Grant Funds for Certain Foreign-Made Drones: The Justice Department's Office of Justice Programs (OJP) announced last Thursday that it had issued new guidance banning the use of agency grants to purchase drones and other unmanned aerial systems from foreign groups deemed threats. ([The Hill](#))

Cyber

CISA's Still Overcoming Challenges 5 Years After Cybersecurity Information Sharing Act Became Law: This month is the fifth anniversary of the Cybersecurity Information Sharing Act, a law that gave DHS a primary role, and made it easier for companies to share cyber threat information without fear of liability or consequences. ([Federal News Network](#))

Agriculture/USDA

Perdue Rebuked for Violating Ethics Law by Boosting Trump's Reelection: The Office of Special Counsel last Thursday ordered Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue to reimburse taxpayers for using an official event to promote President Donald Trump's reelection, a violation of ethics laws that prohibit certain political activity by executive branch employees. ([Politico](#))

USDA Announces School Meals Will Be Free Through End of Year: USDA will allow free school meals to be available to children through the rest of the school year, the department announced last Friday. ([Agri-Pulse](#))

EPA & DOI

Interior Resumes Buying Nonemergency Drones, if They're Pentagon-Approved: Interior Secretary David Bernhardt eased restrictions on such purchases now that the Pentagon's Defense Innovation Unit is offering secure, trusted drones, called Blue sUAS, to agencies. ([Fed Scoop](#))

Trump Administration Eyes Speedy Permit for Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Seismic Tests: A last-minute effort to approve seismic surveys of potential oil reserves in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge before the end of President Donald Trump's first term is underway — and could see that work begin this winter. ([Politico](#))

Feds Sued Over No Longer Allowing Polluters to Pay for Environmental Projects: A conservation group sued the federal government last Thursday over an action taken this year to no longer allow polluters to reduce their fines by paying for projects to help the environment. ([The Hill](#))

Department of Energy

Who Would Run Biden's DOE? If Democratic nominee Joe Biden wins the presidency, he's likely to tap an Energy secretary with the political or scientific chops to make a case for ramping up the federal government's response to climate change. Many suspect it may be one of several high profile Democratic governors or former governors who have focused on the issue themselves. ([Environment & Energy News](#))

DOE Has Chosen Advanced Nuclear Reactor Demonstration Winners: The Department of Energy (DOE) on Oct. 7 notified Congress that it has chosen recipients for its Advanced Reactor Demonstration Program (ARDP) and will make its selections public this week. The program will essentially allow DOE and non-federal resources (through cost-shared agreements with industry) to enable actual construction of advanced nuclear reactors over the near- and mid-term. ([Power News](#))