
Window On Washington - This Week in the Nation's Capital - November 3, 2017, Vol. 1, Issue 33

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Congress

Budget

Continuing Resolution for an Additional Month or Two Becoming More Likely: Key appropriators say lawmakers have discussed a continuing resolution that runs until early February despite previous reports that Congress expected to be able to reach an agreement on a spending deal before the December deadline. Lawmakers would need about a month to finish a full appropriations deal after they agree to top-line spending figures which would give Congress only another week or so to strike a deal on how high to raise spending caps likely increasing the need for a continuing resolution. ([The Hill](#))

Next Disaster Supplemental Bill May Be Delayed: Senate Majority Whip Cornyn from Texas said this week that he was concerned that Congress might not pass a third supplemental spending bill in November as originally expected because there might not be enough time in the Congressional calendar. The White House is expecting to submit its request for the third aid package in mid-November. ([Roll Call](#))

House Republicans Armed Services Committee Members Will Not Vote for a Spending Bill that Shortchanges Defense: In a private meeting, Republican Committee Members told Speaker Ryan that they would not vote for an appropriations bill that did not increase defense spending potentially putting the passage of a defense spending bill in jeopardy. Reports from the meeting said that the group wants \$700 billion for defense programs while the recently passed budget resolution only includes \$640 billion. (Clark Hill Insight)

Tax Reform

House Republicans Roll Out Tax Reform Proposals: The Ways and Means Committee has also announced that they have scheduled a markup of the bill on Monday, November 6. ([Ways and Means](#))

Republicans Launch into Sales Push for Tax Plan: House Republicans have rolled out their long-awaited tax reform bill. Now they have to sell it. Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI), a policy wonk and former House Ways and Means Committee chairman, joined fellow GOP leaders at a news conference Thursday to make the case that the legislation gives a windfall to the middle class. ([The Hill](#))

Republican Tax Plan Has Big Advantages — But Also Real Problems: While corporate interests are largely supportive and Republicans enjoy majorities in the House and Senate, the GOP still only holds narrow majorities and faces significant ideological divides within its own caucus. ([CNBC](#))

House GOP Tax Plan Filled with Tough Tradeoffs: The tax overhaul is Republicans' top priority ahead of next year's elections, and lawmakers are desperate for a victory after the Obamacare repeal failed. House Republicans unveiled plans Thursday for a sweeping overhaul of the tax system calling for fundamental changes in business and individual taxes, including big cuts in rates and new breaks for families. It also includes provisions sure to stoke controversy and fierce lobbying, including new limits on the popular mortgage interest deduction. ([Politico](#))

Banking/Housing

NAMB Issues Policy Position on GSE Reform: The nine-year-old federal conservatorship of the government-sponsored enterprises (GSEs) needs to come to an end sooner than later, according to a recently released policy position issued by the National Association of Mortgage Bankers (NAMB). NAMB President Fred Kreger, CMC has authored an eight-point policy agenda to address the future of the GSEs and the Federal Housing Finance Agency's regulatory control of these entities. ([National Mortgage Professional](#))

Healthcare

House Passes Child Insurance Bill, Sends it to the Senate: The House passed legislation on Friday to reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program and funding for Community Health Centers over objections from most Democrats on how the programs will be funded. The bill now advances to the Senate, which has yet to take up its own version that passed out of committee last month. ([Washington Examiner](#))

House Voted to Repeal Controversial Medicare Cost-Cutting Board: Lawmakers voted 307-111 to abolish what is known as the Independent Payment Advisory Board created under ObamaCare. The board was tasked with coming up with Medicare cuts if spending rises above a certain threshold but has been criticized as outsourcing the work of Congress. The board was never staffed or utilized and was called a "death panel" during the health care debate. ([The Hill](#))

Immigration

Trump, GOP Senators: No DACA Deal in Spending Bill: President Trump and GOP senators agreed during a closed-door White House meeting that they would not include a fix for a key Obama-era program as part of an end-of-the-year spending bill. ([The Hill](#))

Energy

Senate Confirms Multiple Energy Nominees: The Senate confirmed three Department of Energy nominees on Thursday: Mark Menezes to be undersecretary, Paul Dabbar to be undersecretary for science and Steven Winberg to be assistant secretary for fossil energy. The Senate also confirmed two new members, Republican Kevin McIntyre and Democrat Richard Glick, of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission filling the five-member board for the first time under President Trump. ([The Hill](#))

Transportation

EVs From Tesla and GM in Danger of Losing Their Tax Credits: Electric vehicles have caught the eye of many American consumers. But it's not only the cars' green cred that seals the deal. Another big lure: a federal tax credit of up to \$7,500 per vehicle. Now that lucrative incentive may be fading away for two reasons – the House Tax Reform proposal which proposes eliminating it, and the fact that unless amended, the two companies will eventually use up the maximum value of the tax credits allowed under current law. ([Bloomberg](#))

Trump Administration Working to Update Driverless Vehicle Guidance: The Trump administration is already in the process of updating its federal guidance for driverless vehicles, Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao said Thursday. The Department of Transportation (DOT) unveiled a new framework in September designed to pave the way for autonomous vehicles and build upon efforts from the previous administration. ([The Hill](#))

Executive Branch

CFPB

Trump Repeals Consumer Arbitration Rule, Wins Banker Praise: Trump approved the resolution to repeal the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau rule, meant to prevent banks and credit card companies from blocking customers from joining class-action lawsuits against them, in a private Oval Office signing. ([The Hill](#))

EPA

EPA Plans Coal-Country Hearing on Obama Climate Rule Repeal: The Environmental Protection Agency will hold a public hearing this month in West Virginia on its plan to repeal the Obama Administration's climate change rule for power plants. EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt said picking West Virginia, a major coal-producing state, as the location for the hearing shows that the agency cares about the impact of the Clean Power Plan on coal-heavy areas. ([The Hill](#))

HHS

White House Releases Opioid Commissions Report: The report includes over 50 recommendations related to all facets of the crisis. The recommendation most praised by experts is the expansion of medication-assisted treatment which has been endorsed by FDA Commissioner Gottlieb. Additionally, the report includes a recommendation that the FDA should reconsider how it approves medications with abuse potential. ([The Washington Post](#))

CMS Releases Rule to Reduce Payments to Hospitals from a Discount Drug Program: Hospitals that participate in the 340B drug discount program currently receive 6% on top of the drug's average sales price. Starting next year, they will get the average sales price minus 22.5%. That will result in \$1.6 billion in cut payments to hospitals. In response, hospital lobbying groups have announced that they will sue CMS as the changes to program do not follow the intent of Congress. ([Axios](#))

NIH Announced a New Initiative Aimed to Improve Knowledge of Pregnancy: The project, PregSource, will collect data directly from pregnant women and will explore the physical and emotional aspects of pregnancy, labor and delivery and will identify distinct challenges faced by certain subgroups of women. ([NIH Press Release](#))

DOJ

DOJ Issued California Another Warning Over Its Sanctuary State Status: Department of Justice Officials warned that if California does not resolve the situation it could result in future federal grants being withheld from California or the DOJ could "clawback" funds already awarded to the State. ([Fox News](#))

DOJ Exploring Possibly Blocking the AT&T and Time Warner Merger: The US Department of Justice is looking into how it would build a case against the acquisition in federal court, if it comes to that, however the regulatory agency is just as likely to reach a settlement with the companies that would let the deal go forward without running afoul of antitrust law. ([CNET](#))

Trade

U.S. Trade Panel Set to Recommend Solar Trade Tariffs: Federal trade officials on Tuesday will recommend measures to safeguard struggling domestic solar panel manufacturers against cheap imports in a closely watched case that could have a major impact on the price of U.S. solar power. ([Reuters](#))

DOL

Labor Department Appeals Overtime Ruling: The Department of Labor is appealing the Aug. 31 ruling by a federal judge that struck down the Obama

Administration's overtime rule. The DOL also said that once its appeal is docketed with the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans, the Department of Justice will file a motion with the court to hold the appeal in abeyance while Labor "undertakes further rule-making to determine what the salary level should be." The DOL in July called for public comments on the rule amid expectation it would issue a new rule with a lower salary threshold. The overtime rule proposed by the Obama administration would have increased the threshold for overtime-exempt employees to \$913 a week, or \$47,476 annually for a full-time employee, from the current \$455 a week, or \$23,660 annually. ([Business Insurance](#))

NASA

Contentious Bridenstine Nomination Hearing Splits Along Party Lines: Democratic Senators questioned his credentials and viewpoints about climate change, sexual harassment and other issues that could affect how he runs the agency and its personnel. Republicans defended him and chafed at the tenor of the hearing. The committee could vote as early as next week on whether to send the nomination to the full Senate. ([Space Policy Online](#))

NASA Selects Studies for Gateway Power and Propulsion Element: NASA has selected five U.S. companies to conduct four-month studies for a power and propulsion element that could be used as part of the deep space gateway concept. These latest studies will help provide data on commercial capabilities as NASA defines objectives and requirements as well as help reduce risk for a new powerful and efficient solar electric propulsion (SEP) technology in deep space. ([Space Ref](#))

Infrastructure

Border-Wall Bidders Plead for Trump's Help to Fend Off Opponents: Construction companies worried about a backlash for working on President Donald Trump's proposed border wall are pushing for federal protections, including stopping cities and states from penalizing them, as a new battle erupts over his crackdown on illegal immigration. ([Bloomberg](#))

Russian Investigation

Manafort, Gates Plead Not Guilty to Charges in Mueller Probe: President Trump's former campaign manager Paul Manafort on Monday afternoon pleaded not guilty to all charges from special counsel Robert Mueller, who is conducting an investigation into ties between the Trump campaign and Russia. ([The Hill](#))

White House

Trump Seeks To End Diversity Visa Lottery Program: President Trump on Wednesday called for an end to the diversity visa lottery program, which was used by the man suspected of carrying out this week's terrorist attack in New York City, and again pushed for a merit-based immigration system. ([Law 360](#))

Trump picks Jerome Powell to succeed Yellen as Fed Chair: President Trump nominated Jerome Powell to run the Federal Reserve once current Chair Janet Yellen's term expires, in a move widely expected and one unlikely to disturb the roaring stock market. The move follows an extended period of speculation over who would be named to head the central bank, whose aggressive policies have been considered central to a climate of low interest rates, surging job creation and booming asset prices. ([CNBC](#))

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