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Weekly Legislative Update

September 18, 2023

Congressional Outlook

The House and Senate are in session this week. Lawmakers have just 12 days left to pass a short-term continuing resolution (CR) until federal government funding runs out beginning on the first day of Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 on October 1.

This week, the House will focus on a stopgap funding bill after the House Freedom Caucus and Republican Main Street Caucus negotiated a compromise on a 31-day CR (through October 31, 2023). The [deal reached by the two groups](#) within the House Republican Conference, the **Continuing Appropriations and Border Security Enhancement Act, 2024**, would result in an eight percent cut to all domestic agencies while keeping funding for the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs (VA), and Homeland Security at the enacted FY23 levels. It also includes a modified version of the **Secure the Border Act of 2023** ([H.R. 2](#)), which prohibits asylum claims and includes other immigration restrictions. Additionally, the \$40 billion in supplemental aid requested by the White House is not included in the bill. On Monday evening, the House Rules Committee will mark up the CR. Last night, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) met with the House Republican Conference to share the details of the CR and the plan to vote on it this Thursday. As it stands, the CR will have issues passing the House, as over ten House Republicans have come out against the proposal, making the prospects of getting to the current 217-vote threshold difficult. If the CR were to pass out of the House, the legislation would likely receive no support from Senate Democrats or the Biden Administration. Congress must also address full-year FY24 government funding—House

leadership plans to vote on the **Department of Defense Appropriations Act of 2024** ([H.R. 4365](#)) on Wednesday.

In the upper chamber, Senators will regroup after Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) [blocked a unanimous consent request](#) to package the FY24 Military Construction-VA, Agriculture-FDA, and Transportation-HUD Appropriations bills together last Thursday. Sen. Johnson argued that lawmakers should have the chance to debate one FY24 spending bill at a time and was not alone in expressing concerns over the process as Sens. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) and Mike Braun (R-Ind.) said they would consider the three-bill spending package in exchange for an open amendment process. Even after the setback, the Senate calendar includes resuming consideration of the \$280 billion FY24 “minibus” appropriations package (utilizing the House-passed FY24 Military Construction-VA bill text [[H.R. 4366](#)] as a vehicle) consisting of the FY24 Military Construction-VA, Agriculture-Rural Development, and Transportation-HUD Appropriations bills. The Senate will also vote on **Vernon Oliver** to be a U.S. District Judge for the District of Connecticut and **Rita Lin** to be a U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of California.

The House will consider [8 suspension bills](#), including the **Veterans Education Oversight Expansion Act** ([H.R. 3981](#)), which increases the VA’s oversight capacity and restores benefits to defrauded veterans. The House will also vote on a resolution “Condemning the actions of Governor of New Mexico, Michelle Lujan Grisham, for subverting the Second Amendment to the Constitution and depriving the citizens of New Mexico of their right to bear arms” ([H. Res. 684](#)).

For the remainder of the week, the Senate will hold several hearings, including an Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee [hearing](#) to “**Examine Drought Impacts on Drinking Water Access and Water Availability**,” and an Environment and Public Works Committee

[hearing](#) examining “**Drinking Water Infrastructure and Tribal Communities**.” The House will hold a Natural Resources Subcommittee [hearing](#) on “**Examining Barriers to Access in Federal Waters: A Closer Look at the Marine Sanctuary and Monument System**,” a Transportation and Infrastructure Committee [hearing](#) on “**Oversight of the Department of Transportation’s Policies and Programs**” a Science, Space, and Technology Committee [hearing](#) on “**Chips on the Table: A one year review of the Chips and Science Act**,” and a Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee [hearing](#) on “**FEMA: The Current State of Disaster Readiness, Response, and Recovery**.”

Bills and Regulations of Interest to You

Bill	Title	Sponsors	Background
H.R. 5407	School Modernization and Efficient Access to Lunches for Students (MEALS) Act of 2023	Rep. Jahana Hayes (D-CT-5)	Streamlines the approval process for students in need of free school meals, increase community eligibility, reduce administrative work and address unpaid meal debt.
S. 2790	Office of Disaster Recovery and Resilience Act	Sen. Alex Padilla (D-CA)	Reforms rural housing programs, and for other purposes.
H.R. 5425	Bill to amend the Small Business Act	Rep. Jared Golden (D-ME-2)	Appoints a permanent Assistant Administrator to run the Office of Rural Affairs, require webinars and outreach events, and create transparency by mandating an annual report on the activities of the agency.
H.R. 5437	Protecting Infrastructure Investments for Rural America Act	Rep. Brad Finstad (R-MN-1)	Ensures the rural surface transportation grant program is accessible to rural areas.
H.R. 5446	Justice for Angel Families Act	Rep. Troy Nehls (R-TX-22)	Authorizes grants for crime victims to be distributed to angel families.
H.R. 5455	Collision Avoidance Systems Act of 2023	Rep. Daniel Webster (R-FL-11)	Clarifies certain regulations to allow for the installation of pulsating light systems for high-mounted stop lamps,
S. 2779	Office of Disaster Recovery and Resilience Act	Sen. Alex Padilla (D-CA)	Establishes a permanent Office of Disaster Recovery and Resilience within the Economic Development Administration (EDA), which would be tasked with supporting the short- and long-term economic recovery efforts of communities impacted by natural disasters.

H.R. 5473	Promoting Resilient Buildings Act of 2023	Rep. Edwards, Chuck (R-NC-11)	Amends certain laws relating to disaster recovery and relief with respect to the implementation of building codes.
H.R. 5466 & S. 2798	Building Up Farmland Frontiers for Ecological Resilience (BUFFER) Act	Rep. Rebecca Balint (D-VT-At Large) & Sen. Bernie Sanders (D-VT)	Amends the Food Security Act of 1985 to expand the definition of eligible land for the purposes of the conservation reserve program.
H.R. 5463	Arts Education for All Act	Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR-1)	Increases access to the arts for students.

Agency	Title	Proposed Regulation	Comment Deadline
US Army Corps of Engineers / DoD	WRDA Request for Proposals	The Water Resources Development Act of 2020 directs the Secretary of the Army to implement a pilot program for carrying out projects under a continuing authority program for economically disadvantaged communities at 100% Federal cost.	October 20, 2023
NOAA	Equitable Delivery of Climate Services	NOAA seeks information on how to enhance their delivery of climate data, information, science, and tools and ensure that this delivery is equitable.	October 21, 2023
FEMA	Simplifying FEMA Preparedness Grants	FEMA aims to improve the management and administration of its preparedness grant programs to continue to assist the nation in building and sustaining capabilities to prevent, prepare for, protect against, and respond to terrorist attacks and other hazards.	November 7, 2023

DOL	Proposed Overtime Rule	Defining and Delimiting the Exemptions for Executive, Administrative, Professional, Outside Sales, and Computer Employees	November 7, 2023
GSA	Updated Guidance for Non-Federal Entities Access to Federal Supply Schedules	Updates and clarifies the requirements for use of Federal Supply Schedule (FSS) contracts by eligible non-Federal entities, such as State and local governments.	November 17, 2023

Week in Review

[Combo appropriations package hits the skids in Senate](#)

[House GOP makes first move in stopgap funding fight](#)

[Citing health issues, Wexton decides not to run again](#)

[Another doomed GOP spending plan collapses](#)