



PAACC FEDERAL UPDATE

AUGUST 2018

Major Washington News

August Recess

The House is currently on August recess until after Labor Day. The Senate returned to session early on August 15 to advance several issues, including appropriations bills and judicial nominations. Senate Republican leaders are also working to convince Democrats to confirm several nominations in a package under unanimous consent. Among the appointments are operations heads for the Treasury and Commerce departments, Internal Revenue Service, and a Federal Reserve board member, as well as more than 40 federal judiciary picks for overseeing business litigation.

Appropriations Update

With the passage of a four-bill appropriations package on August 1, the Senate has now passed seven of the twelve fiscal year 2019 bills. The Transportation-HUD, Interior-EPA, Financial Services, and Agriculture-FDA spending bills package passed with a vote of 92-6.

The Senate cut short their August recess and returned to session on August 15 for a short week. Their main priorities in coming back early are to debate two judicial nominees for the Fourth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals; and to work appropriations for Defense and Labor-HHS-Education. The bills we passed by the Senate Appropriations on a bi-partisan vote of 30-1, but face some obstacles in the full Senate. Leaders hope to avoid a debate over immigration policy that may come up with the Labor-HHS bill. The House has passed six appropriations bills.

Farm Bill Update

After passing their respective versions of the Farm Bill, the House and Senate have now set a conferee committee to work out the differences before the current authorization expires on September 30. The House Farm Bill included reforms on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)-they eliminated the Conservation Stewardship Program-and the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) increased from 24 million acres to 29 million. There were different changes in the Senate bill. For example, they reduced the Adjusted Gross Income cap for the Title 1 program payment eligibility from \$900,000 to \$700,000, and they increased the CRP from 24 million acres to 25 million.

Business & Industry

Cybersecurity Bill Becomes Law¹

On August 14, President Trump signed into law a cybersecurity bill that helps small businesses stop cybersecurity threats. This bill amends the National Institute of Standards and Technology Act to require the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to consider small businesses when it facilitates and supports the development of voluntary, consensus-based, industry-led guidelines and procedures to cost-effectively reduce cyber risks to critical infrastructure.

NIST must disseminate, and publish on its website, standard and method resources that small business may use voluntarily to help reduce their cybersecurity risks. The resources must be: (1) technology-neutral, (2) based on international standards to the extent possible, (3) able to vary with the nature and size of the implementing small business and the sensitivity of the data collected or stored on the information systems, and (4) consistent with the national cybersecurity awareness and education program under the Cybersecurity Enhancement Act of 2014.

Other federal agencies that NIST considers appropriate must also publish the resources on their own websites.

Infrastructure

Shuster Releases Infrastructure Framework

On July 23, House Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman Bill Shuster announced his plan for infrastructure legislation that would solidify the Highway Trust Fund. provisions to raise the gas tax by 15 cents, the diesel tax by 20 cents, and then to eliminate the tax by 2028. Shuster would replace the gas tax with new user fees—including a vehicle-miles-traveled program to feed the highway fund, as well as taxes on electric vehicle batteries and bike tires among other road users. The Highway Trust Fund will become insolvent in 2020, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

Congressman Shuster is not seeking re-election so the next Chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee will need to address the Highway Trust Fund issues, as well as the FAST Act, which expires in 2020. Reps. Jeff Denham (R-Calif.) and Sam Graves (R-Mo.) are both in the running for the Chairmanship.

Water Resources Development Act

The House passed its version of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) on June 6 by a vote of 408-2. WRDA is biennial legislation that authorizes water resources projects constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Senate hopes to tackle the bill early this fall, but the House and Senate will need to reconcile the differences

¹ Information regarding the cybersecurity bill was derived from the bill's CRS summary: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/770>

between their versions before it can be signed by the President. The Army Corp estimates a construction backlog of nearly \$96 billion.

Defense

National Defense Authorization Act Signed into Law

The House and Senate passed the Fiscal Year 2019 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) on July 26 and August 1, respectively. President Trump held an event at Fort Drum in New York to sign the bill on August 13.

The NDAA authorizes \$716 billion in defense programs, including \$639.1 billion in base funding and about \$69 billion in Overseas Contingency Operations funding. Among other provisions, the bill supports a 2.6 percent pay increase for the military.

Military

Coverage for Agent Orange Exposure Discussed in Senate Hearing

On August 1, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee held a hearing to discuss medical coverage and disability compensation for Agent Orange exposure. The House passed HR 299 on a vote of 382-0. The House bill would expand a presumption of coverage to blue water Navy veterans who served on ships during the Vietnam War. The VA does not currently cover benefits for this group of veterans because they did not "have boots on the ground." The Department of Veteran Affairs opposes the legislation because they say the science does not support the veterans' claims. The legislation would affect an estimated 70,000 veterans.

Aviation

FAA Reauthorization

The House passed the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization last month. Meanwhile, the Senate has been stuck in procedural negotiations and has been unable to advance its version of the bill (S.1405). The current extension that was passed in March will expire on September 30. Leaders hope to avoid passing another short-term extension, but with the prospect of debating several amendments on the Senate floor, there may not be enough time before the mid-term elections to pass a long-term reauthorization.

Congressional Schedule

August

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Senate in Session	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15 Senate in Session	16 Senate in Session	17 Senate in Session	18
19	20 Senate in Session	21 Senate in Session	22 Senate in Session	23 Senate in Session	24 Senate in Session	25
26	27 Senate in Session	28 Senate in Session	29 Senate in Session	30 Senate in Session	31 Senate in Session	

September

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3	4 House & Senate in Session	5 House & Senate in Session	6 House & Senate in Session	7 House & Senate in Session	8
9	10	11	12 House & Senate in Session	13 House & Senate in Session	14 House & Senate in Session	15
16	17 Senate in Session	18 Senate in Session	19	20 Senate in Session	21 Senate in Session	22
23	24 Senate in Session	25 House & Senate in Session	26 House & Senate in Session	27 House & Senate in Session	28 House & Senate in Session	29

Out of Session



Both in Session



One Chamber in Session

