

# Gray & Oscar LLC

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**RE:** CONGRESSIONAL UPDATE

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***This Week in Congress:*** We are nearing a month into the government shutdown, the longest in our nation's history, with no resolution on the horizon despite lawmakers' attempts to offer potential solutions. In the House, Speaker Pelosi offered another round of funding measures to temporarily reopen the government, but none of these measures included additional resources for a border wall. Meanwhile, a group of bipartisan senators met in search of a solution including Sens. Manchin (D-WV), Gardner (R-CO), Coons (D-DE) and Graham (R-SC), among others. A previous gathering of moderates that included some of the same members dissolved without making any progress. Senate Majority Leader McConnell has been largely absent from the shutdown debate, saying he will not consider any legislation for a vote if the president plans to veto it. Finally, President Trump has given no indication that he would be willing to compromise or agree to any solution that does not include \$5.7 billion in wall construction funding.

## **THE WALL:**

- **National Emergency:** President Trump signaled last Friday that a partial government shutdown could drag on for a while, and he said he will not move "fast" to declare a national emergency to access funds for a border wall. The President said he has the "right" and legal authority to make the move, which would allow him to access Defense Department dollars and shift them to the construction of a steel barrier on the U.S.-Mexico border, but he made clear he plans to continue to press Democrats to give in to his demands before he issues such a decree.
- **Negotiations:** There have been no negotiations between the White House and House/Senate Leadership since last Wednesday. Democrats said that they would be open to negotiating over border security once the government was re-opened. Senator Graham also argued for re-opening the government before pursuing other options for a border wall.
- **Polls:** The conservative news aggregator Drudge Report's banner headline on Monday was, "Trump approval lowest in a year," and a new Quinnipiac University survey found that nearly two-thirds of voters support the Democratic proposal to reopen parts of the government that do not deal with border security while negotiating funding for a wall.

**APPROPRIATIONS:** Senate Majority Leader McConnell will not consider any of the appropriations bills recently passed by the House until an agreement is reached on the border wall.

**COURTS (Citizenship Census Question):** On Tuesday, a federal judge in New York blocked the Commerce Department from adding a question on American citizenship to the 2020 census, handing a legal victory to critics who accused the Trump administration of trying to turn the census into a tool to advance Republican political fortunes. The ruling marks the opening round in a legal battle which will probably reach the Supreme Court before the printing of census forms begins this summer. A broad coalition of advocacy groups and state and local officials had argued that the citizenship question was effectively forced into the census under false pretenses, in violation of laws enacted to ensure that federal policies heed the public interest.

**Rep. King (R-IA):** Yesterday the House Republican Steering Committee unanimously decided not to seat Rep. Steve King on any committees for the 116th Congress. Minority Leader McCarthy met with Rep. King and informed him of the action of the Steering Committee. King has faced widespread backlash in recent days for questioning, in a New York Times interview, why the terms "white supremacist" and "white nationalist" had become "offensive." In a statement, King called the move "a political decision that ignores the truth." He said a quote in his Times interview was "completely mischaracterized." He continued, "I will continue to point out the truth and work with all the vigor that I have to represent 4th District Iowans for at least the next two years."