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***This Week in Congress:*** The House and Senate are in session this week. The House considered H.R. 1, legislation that would overhaul elections, ethics and campaign finance laws. The Senate continued work on executive and judicial nominations.

**PFAS SENATE LEGISLATION:** On Friday, March 1, 2019, senate legislation was introduced with bipartisan support, which would classify the fluorinated chemicals known as PFAS as hazardous substances under the Superfund toxics law, an important step toward cleaning up widespread contamination by these compounds across the nation.

The PFAS Action Act of 2019 would require the Environmental Protection Agency within one year to designate PFAS chemicals as hazardous substances under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, better known as Superfund. This designation triggers requirements to report releases of the chemicals into the environment and cleanup of contaminated sites, and allows the government to sue polluters to recover the costs of cleanup.

The legislation was introduced by Sens. Carper (D-DE), Capito (R-WV), Peters (R-MI), Tillis (R-NC), Stabenow (D-MI), Rubio (R-FL), Gardner (R-CO), Reed (D-RI), Murkowski (R-AK), Merkley (D-OR), Shaheen (D-NH), Burr (R-NC), Bennet (D-CO) and Manchin (D-WV).

EPA tests have detected PFAS pollution of public water supplies for 16 million Americans in 33 states, but that is considered a severe underestimate of the scope of the problem.

**NATIONAL EMERGENCY DESIGNATION:** On Monday, Senate Majority Leader McConnell acknowledged that "there will be enough votes in the Senate to pass the resolution of disapproval" blocking President Trump's declaration of a national emergency on the southern border. Sen. Paul (R-KY) became the fourth Senate Republican to announce support for the House-passed resolution. McConnell stated that there could be as many as 10 Republicans or "possibly more" that would vote to overturn the national emergency in the final vote. McConnell is still exploring if the Senate could amend the resolution. "It's never been done before... we've been looking at and talking to the parliamentarian about what options there are, if any" McConnell said.

**EARMARKS:** Senate appropriators do not plan to revive earmarks this year, following the House's lead set late last week by House Appropriations Chair Lowey. Per Senate Appropriations Chairman Shelby, "I would listen to meritorious things, but I don't see that happening right now." Senator Blunt stated "I think if the House would have changed their rule, we would have had to reconsider, but I think it's unlikely that the Senate takes the lead there."

**HOUSE INVESTIGATION OF PRESIDENT TRUMP:** On Monday, the House Judiciary Committee sent document requests to 81 people and other organizations tied to President Trump, launching an investigation into whether the president and his administration have engaged in obstruction of justice, corruption, and abuse of power. The full list of recipients included the president's sons Donald Jr. and Eric Trump, son-in-law Jared Kushner, campaign manager Brad Parscale, Trump Organization chief financial officer Allen Weisselberg, former Attorney General Jeff Sessions, former White House counsel Don McGahn, and former White House communications director Hope Hicks, among others. In addition, three House Democratic committee chairmen sent letters to acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo,

requesting documents and interviews related to communications between President Trump and Russian president Vladimir Putin.

**THE ECONOMY:** Joseph Howell, White House Policy Advisor, shared this information with me that for the first time in 13 years the U.S. has hit 3.1 economic growth during a fourth-quarter to fourth-quarter period. Real GDP grew 2.6 in Q4 and 3.1% during the four quarters of 2018. Per Howell, this Administration's GDP growth for 2018 is higher than any year under the last Administration; their highest was 2.7. Unemployment is currently 4.0 and recently hit 3.7, the lowest rate in nearly 50 years.

Per the Council of Economic Advisers's Article entitled "[2018—A Banner Year for the U.S. Economy:](#)"

- In 2018 (2017:Q4 to 2018:Q4), the U.S. economy grew at a rapid rate of 3.1 percent, the fastest pace for any calendar year since 2005, with output rising by \$560 billion over the four quarters of the year. For the second consecutive year, economic growth precisely matched or narrowly exceeded the Administration's own forecast, outperforming consensus forecasts in the process. Gross private domestic investment, just 17 percent of GDP at the start of the year, accounted for 36 percent of the growth in real GDP in 2018. Real investment in intellectual property products, up 10.8 percent, and grew at its fastest pace since 1999.
- The Administration's official FY2018 forecast, finalized in November 2017, was for 2018 calendar year growth of 3.1 percent, compared to the consensus Blue Chip forecast of 2.3 percent, which was made in the same time period (November 2017). Even following passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, the January 2018 consensus forecast for 2018 growth was only 2.6 percent. Achieving 3.1 percent growth in 2018 therefore marks the second consecutive year that the U.S. economy has exceeded consensus forecasts. As reported in
- Over the 7 full quarters of the Trump Administration, real output has grown at a compound annual rate of 2.9 percent, compared to a compound annual growth rate of 2.3 percent during the preceding 4-year Presidential term.