

# Gray & Oscar LLC

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***This Week in Congress:*** The House considered immigration legislation and the Senate debated a five year farm bill.

**COMMITTEE MEETINGS:**

- On Tuesday, June 26, 2018, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee considered and debated the Perkins Act Reauthorization.

**IMMIGRATION:** The House debated a second Republican immigration bill, after repeated delays last week. The House bill would provide a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers and would authorize \$25 billion for a border wall and other security measures. It would also make changes to two legal immigration programs. It is billed as a compromise among varied GOP factions.

**FARM BILL (Senate):** On Tuesday, June 26<sup>th</sup>, the Senate debated their version of the farm bill. Last week the House passed the bill by a vote of 213-211. The House Republican written bill would restructure nutrition assistance and received no support from Democrats. The Senate version of the bill stays way from controversial changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps. Committee action on the measure included a fight between Majority Leader McConnell and Senator Grassley on hemp products and crop insurance for hemp farmers. Grassley is expected to offer a floor amendment on the issue.

**OPIOID LEGISLATION:** Last Friday, the House passed legislation that contains almost 60 standalone bills to address the opioid epidemic.

**RESCISSIONS:** Last Thursday, the Senate failed to get the votes needed to discharge the bill from the Appropriations Committee. The vote was 48-50, with Sens. Burr and Collins joining all the Democrats in opposition. An aide to Senator Burr said the Senator voted against the procedural motion when he was not guaranteed a vote on an amendment to protect \$16 million for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which helps state and local governments acquire land for recreation. Supporters of the rescission package were surprised at the outcome of the vote. This action led to the 45-day clock to expire on Friday, June 22<sup>nd</sup>, which effectively killed the bill. White House officials have indicated there's no backup plan following the measure's demise in the Senate, and additional rescissions bills, even to roll back some of the omnibus money, as they initially considered, don't appear likely at this point.

**POTUS (Reorganize Government Agencies):** Last Thursday, President Trump released a plan for a government organization that proposes to merge the Labor and Education Departments as part of a broader reorganization of the federal government. Additionally, the plan would rename and reshape Health and Human Services (HHS), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps. HHS would become the Department of Health and Public Welfare, in charge of several public assistance programs now overseen by the Department of Agriculture, including the \$70 billion Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. HHS already oversees Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, which provides cash assistance to low-income households, and Medicaid, which provides health coverage for more than 70 million low-income Americans. Under the plan, SNAP, the supplemental nutrition program for Women, Infants and Children, and other food programs would be housed within HHS' Administration for Children and Families. Also, FDA would lose its food safety responsibilities and get a new name: the Federal Drug Administration. Food safety would be consolidated under a new agency at USDA. The Trump administration said this would free up FDA resources to focus on its "core responsibilities" of drugs, devices, biologics and tobacco. The Trump Administration wants to move three research arms of HHS (the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, and the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research) under NIH's umbrella. Finally, the Strategic National Stockpile, a massive repository of drugs designated for a public health emergency, would also be moved from the CDC to the HHS Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response. These changes would require approval from Congress, but it is uncertain that lawmakers would take on such a reorganization. This action is part of a rebranding effort, championed by conservative think tanks and House Republicans, to limit the size of government and its programs.

**POTUS (Gallup Poll):** The latest Gallup poll has President Trump's approval at a new high since the beginning of his presidency at 45%, roughly the same as other presidents at this point: Obama (46%), Clinton (46%), Reagan (45%), and Carter (43%). Support among Republicans is 90% and among independents President Trump's up to 42%, tied for his personal best, and the only the fourth week in his presidency that he has been at 40% or above.

#### **NORTH AMERICAN SHALE GAS EXPLORATION:**

- ***EPA's Delays Biofuel Quotas for Refiners:*** The Environmental Protection Agency has delayed its plan to increase biofuel quotas for large refiners. The plan would have required large refineries to blend an additional 1.5 billion gallons of biofuels under the Renewable Fuel Standard to make up for small refineries exempted from the program.