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RE: CONGRESSIONAL UPDATE

This Week in Congress: On Monday, Congress returned to Washington, D.C. to begin an intensive legislative session with an eleven day schedule. It's expected that Congress will not be in session in October; especially if a spending deal is reached by September 30th avoiding a government shutdown. As of Monday, there are 62 days until the midterm elections.

This week, the Senate Judiciary Committee will consider President Trump's nominee for the Supreme Court, Judge Brett Kavanaugh. Additionally, this week, the 2018 Farm Bill negotiators met, along with the appropriators overseeing the first of three FY19 spending bills. On Wednesday, the House Energy and Commerce Committee held a hearing on Twitter's transparency featuring CEO Jack Dorsey, Facebook Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg, and Larry Page, the CEO of Google parent company Alphabet. Finally, the House approved several homeland security bills, which would prevent travelers not registered with PreCheck from using PreCheck lanes even when airports are busy, etc.

NAFTA (Labor Groups): The Trump Administration and its top trade negotiator have tried to work with labor union leaders and rank-and-file workers as it tries to renegotiate NAFTA. Per some labor leaders, who for decades have been firmly in the Democratic Party's camp, "say they're open-minded toward President Trump and many leaders have been given White House access as the deal has been renegotiated." On the surface at least, the revamped deal with Mexico has tried to tackle one of labor's biggest complaints: the temptation for companies to move manufacturing to low-wage countries. Stay tuned.

HEARINGS: On Wednesday, September 5th, the House Higher Education and Workforce Development Subcommittee held a hearing on "On the Job: Rebuilding the Workforce through Apprenticeships." The hearing examined how the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act supports work-based learning, including on-the-job education and apprenticeships.

LABOR PRIORITIES: On Tuesday, Democrats joined by AFL-CIO president Richard Trumka released a report on the "Future of Work Wages and Labor" assembled by Reps. DeSaulnier (CA), Pocan (WI), Norcross (NJ), and Dingell (MI). The report proposes raising the minimum wage, guaranteeing workers paid leave, banning stock buybacks, ramping up antitrust enforcement, indexing the overtime salary threshold to inflation, expanding sector-wide collective bargaining, and various other reforms related to the Supreme Court's June decision in *Janus v. AFSCME*.

MIDDLECLASS (Stagnation): A new Brookings Report, claimed that stagnant wage growth may be causing more middle class families to rely on welfare. Per the report, the share of welfare benefits going to the middle class (defined as the middle 60% of the income distribution) has more than doubled since 1979.

OPIOIDS: The Senate is working on a bill to combat opioid addiction, but differences between the House and Senate versions could delay enactment. Majority McConnell has hinted at a possible vote as early as this week, saying that Republicans agree on the bill. However, Democrats are hoping that Republican leaders will keep working them on some of their priorities.

ELECTION 2018:

- **Massachusetts Primary:** Voters in the most watched race in Massachusetts' 7th District, where Rep. Mike Capuano (D-MA) faced his first serious challenger since taking office in 1999, Boston City Councilor Ayanna Pressley, who received the backing of New York Democrat Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey, as well as the state's two largest newspapers, the Boston Globe and the Boston Herald. Rep. Capuano lost his primary to Pressley 58.9% to 41.1%. He is a 10-term democrat, a member of the Congressional Progressive Caucus and boasted one of the most liberal voting records in Congress.
- **Vice President Biden:** Per the Associate Press, "advisers say Joe Biden to decide on a 2020 run by January."
- **Rahm Emanuel:** Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel made a surprise announcement that he will not seek re-election to a third term, opening up the city's venerable Fifth Floor to an outsider candidate for the first time in decades.

NORTH AMERICAN SHALE GAS EXPLORATION:

- **Dakota Access Pipeline:** Following a June 2017 court-ordered review, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers determined its permit for Energy Transfer Partners LP's Dakota Access Pipeline that allowed for the project's completion is environmentally sound and does not disproportionately impact minority groups, including tribes.
- **Colorado's Anti-Hydraulic Fracturing Legislative Initiative:** Initiative 97 revives Colorado's long-running fight over hydraulic fracturing, in the nation's seventh-largest oil producing state. The initiative calls for widening the buffer zone to 2,500 feet between new hydraulic fracturing operations and "vulnerable areas" including homes, schools and water sources. Finally, this initiative is viewed by energy industry backers as a de facto ban on drilling in the state.