



## International Right of Way Association Weekly Update

Monday, September 16, 2019

### The White House

- President Trump is dealing with a potential response to the attack on Saudi Arabia's oil production facilities last week, as well as a United Autoworkers strike today against General Motors. Also, with two weeks to go before the end of the fiscal year, there are less than ten legislative days to avoid a federal government shutdown. The negotiations regarding the budget are likely to feature another clash regarding funding for the border wall promised by Trump. However, the President also seems quite focused on his role as campaigner in chief.
- President Trump heads to Rio Rancho, NM today for a campaign rally that will likely highlight the discrepancy between growing oil and gas production in that state, and the "Green New Deal" being advanced by Congressional Democrats. Trump will likely try to pin the Green New Deal on Rep. Ben Ray Lujan (D-N.M.), who is part of House leadership. Lujan is also running for the Democratic nomination for New Mexico's open senate seat held by Sen. Tom Udall (D). After this event, Trump heads on to other campaign rallies in California. This likely not a White House effort to change the partisan composition of the US House of Representatives, as these are two deep blue states. Instead, this seems to be an attempt by Trump to expand his own electoral playing field. <https://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/460329-trump-to-hold-campaign-rally-in-new-mexico>. Ben Ray Lujan appears likely to succeed Udall in the Senate seat. Also, the three Congressional seats are very likely to stay in Democrat hands. Overall in the US House, there are twenty seats are currently open, (including the seat of a Wisconsin congressman who will resign next week). Only four of those twenty are now held by a Democrat; but fourteen of the twenty are projected to remain with the party that currently holds the seat.

### Congress

- Both Chambers are in session this week.
- Senate Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-IA) told reporters this week that he will not begin working to identify the funding necessary to support the Senate Environment and Public Works ("EPW") Committee's surface transportation bill until he gets an indication from Senate Majority Leader McConnell (R-KY) about what McConnell would support and allow to move to Senate Floor consideration. McConnell, Grassley, and EPW Committee Chairman John Barrasso (R-WY) intend to discuss funding options in the near future.

- Congress has two weeks to extend government funding before a shut-down occurs at the end of this fiscal year.

### Analysis

- Negotiation over the government funding measure necessary to avert a shut-down, including whether or not such an extension of government funding will be “clean” or include policy riders, will dominate the calendar over the next couple of weeks.
- Progress on surface transportation legislation has slowed as the difficult discussion over how to fund the measure takes center stage. Barrasso has ruled out his support for an increase in the federal gas tax, leaving limited options to fund the measure.
- In addition, the Senate Banking Committee, which has jurisdiction over public transportation issues, and the Senate Commerce Committee, which has jurisdiction over regulatory and safety issues, have not taken any public action on their components of the surface transportation bill.