



International Right of Way Association Weekly Update

Monday, September 30, 2019

The White House

- The President signed a government funding bill to extend funding through November 21st. Congress will continue to on appropriations bills under the bi-partisan budget caps that were enacted in July. <https://www.cnn.com/2019/09/27/politics/trump-signs-short-term-spending-bill/index.html>
- The attention of the President, for the foreseeable future, will be on the impeachment activities launched by the House last week. <https://www.cbsnews.com/live-news/trump-impeachment-inquiry-democrats-plot-path-forward-on-whistleblower-complaint-live-updates/>

Congress

- Both Chambers are in recess this week.
- Speaker Pelosi announced that the House was beginning an impeachment inquiry stemming from allegations raised by a government whistleblower into the President's actions with foreign leaders. Last Thursday, the House Intelligence Committee held an open hearing with Acting Director of National Security Joseph Maguire to discuss the allegations. <https://www.c-span.org/video/?464509-1/acting-director-national-intelligence-maguire-testifies-whistleblower-complaint>

Analysis

- The current strategy of House Democrats is to advance the impeachment inquiry as quickly as possible. The likelihood that this only takes a few months is slim, however. Congressional investigations always take time, let alone one as unprecedented and complex as this. The political calculus may also shift as this process wears on – the current thinking appears to be that a quick process that causes the least pain for moderate House Democrats defending their seats in Republican Districts is the best strategy. However, as this drifts into a Presidential election year, House Democrats may find some upside in dragging this out for as long as possible.
- The impeachment inquiry impacts the possibility of enacting infrastructure legislation in three specific ways:
 - The House's attention will be focused on this issue, so House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Peter DeFazio (D-OR) will have to advance

his version of the surface transportation reauthorization bill around these activities. Whether Speaker Pelosi gives him the blessing to move forward at all is an open question.

- Assuming the House ultimately votes to impeach the President, then the action moves to the Senate where there are a handful of vulnerable Republican Senators running for reelection. Given the uncertainty of the Presidential election and the ability of the Senate to keep a majority, Senate Majority Leader McConnell (R-KY) will not put anything on the Senate Floor that doesn't directly advance his agenda. While infrastructure funding can be a positive message to campaign on, it is a complex issue that has no easy solutions and would be sure to take at least a full week to consider on the Senate Floor.
- Regardless of how the specific details pan out, the relationship between the President and the House has never been worse. Any kind of productive cooperation on between the House and the Administration on legislation is difficult to imagine.