



International Right of Way Association Weekly Update

Monday, November 25, 2019

The White House

- The President signed a continuing resolution (“CR”) on Thursday to extend government funding hours before the shutdown deadline. The CR will fund the government at current levels through midnight on December 20, 2019.
<https://markets.businessinsider.com/news/stocks/trump-punts-government-shutdown-threat-just-before-christmas-spending-bill-2019-11-1028709853>

Congress

- Both Chambers are in recess this week.
- The House Transportation and Infrastructure (“T&I”) Committee on Wednesday approved H.R. 5120, the SAFER Pipelines Act of 2019, on a largely party-line vote. The bill would reauthorize federal pipeline safety program.
<https://transportation.house.gov/news/press-releases/committee-approves-slate-of-legislation-to-reauthorize-pipeline-safety-programs-create-transparency-in-gsa-leases-prevent-sexual-assault-and-harassment-in-transportation-and-strengthen-faa-oversight-of-foreign-repair-stations>

Analysis

- The good news is that the government did not shut down last week, but the bad news is that another funding showdown is set for just before Christmas. This gives Congress and the President less than a month to negotiate individual spending bills for fiscal year 2020 and the likely outcome is another short-term CR at baseline levels.
- The T&I Committee marked up the SAFER Pipelines Act of 2019 last week, but the most notable aspect is that it was on a party-line vote, with one Democrat joining the Republicans in voting against the measure. Pipeline reauthorization bills are historically bipartisan, even though they deal with some politically sensitive issues, so the fact that the T&I Committee could not negotiate a bipartisan deal on this legislation speaks to the difficulty of the current political environment.
- While impeachment and government funding issues will continue to dominate headlines and attention in Congress, the fact that the T&I Committee could not advance this measure on a bipartisan basis does not inspire confidence in the ability to mobilize

diverse factions around a surface transportation reauthorization bill, let alone a comprehensive infrastructure package.