



## International Right of Way Association Weekly Update

Monday, June 19, 2017

### Trump Administration

- This past week marked the Administration's self-proclaimed "Workforce Development Week" to focus on skills training. The President kicked off the week with a meeting of his fully confirmed Cabinet, and major news networks covered the unusual sight of Cabinet secretaries heaping praise on the President one by one as they went around the table. Additionally, Labor Secretary Acosta delivered a presentation on apprenticeships. The President then traveled to Wisconsin for a tour of Waukesha County Technical College and to lead a roundtable discussion.  
<http://www.nydailynews.com/newswires/news/business/trump-call-nation-full-apprentices-article-1.3243266>
- President Trump signed an Executive Order on "Apprenticeship and Workforce of Tomorrow Initiatives" on Wednesday. The EO directs several agencies to promote apprenticeship programs, including using existing funds to expand access. It also directs the creation of a Labor Department-led Task Force on Apprenticeship Expansion to identify ways to promote apprenticeships and report back to the President. Agencies are also directed to report to OMB on current skills development programs and how they can be improved as next year's budget is developed. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/06/15/remarks-president-trump-signing-executive-order-apprenticeship-and>
- That event was overshadowed by the shooting at a Congressional baseball practice with victims including House Majority Whip Steve Scalise, Capitol Police Special Agents Crystal Griner and David Bailey, congressional staffer Zack Barth, and former staffer and Tyson Foods lobbyist Matt Mika. Scalise and Mika are still in the hospital, and the Special Agents have been lauded as heroes for continuing to face down the suspect even while injured, preventing a larger tragedy.
- Additionally, the President rolled back the loosening economic policy towards Cuba put in place by the Administration. He outlined the policy changes during a speech in Miami.  
<http://thehill.com/policy/international/338160-trump-draws-a-harder-line-on-cuba>  
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/06/16/fact-sheet-cuba-policy>

### Congress

- Congress is formally beginning the FY18 appropriations process, as Trump Administration leadership appears in a flurry of hearings held by the House and Senate Appropriations Committees. Speaker Paul Ryan and House Budget Committee Chairwoman Diane Black have been working within their conference to secure enough

Republican votes to pass a budget in order to provide spending levels for the appropriations process.

- On Thursday, Secretary Chao testified before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies about the Department's FY18 budget request. She heard criticism about the 13% cut in funding levels requested, as well as uncertainty over the proposal to privatize the U.S. air traffic control system supported by the Administration and House Transportation Committee Chairman Shuster. Additionally, she backed away from earlier statements from the Administration that infrastructure would be tied to tax reform, saying "Those discussions, it seems, have ebbed...receded." <http://thehill.com/policy/transportation/337991-trumps-transportation-budget-runs-into-resistance-from-both-parties>  
<https://www.bna.com/appropriators-share-misgivings-n73014453452/>
- Secretary Chao also addressed the issue of how to pay for an infrastructure plan, saying they have ideas but no firm decisions. "We all want benefits, but there's some group that will not like some solution. We have not yet made any decisions nor any conclusions nor any agreements among ourselves about how to do that, but suffice to say nothing is off the table."
- Secretary Chao had been scheduled to also testify before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, but that will be rescheduled.
- Some Members are becoming nervous about the short legislative timeframe before FY18 begins, and are advocating that instead of trying to pass individual bills, the Appropriations Committees prepare a year-long government-wide spending bill before the August recess begins. This would be a challenging timeframe to meet.
- <http://www.govexec.com/management/2017/06/house-republicans-push-expedited-consolidated-2018-spending-bill/138608/>

### Analysis

- Workforce Development Week, like Infrastructure Week, was dominated by unrelated news.
- However, the cloud and expanse of investigations into Russian interference with U.S. elections may have grown this week. News networks shifted from coverage of the Congressional shooting back to former FBI Director Mueller's role as DOJ special counsel investigating the issue and the possible investigation of the President himself for obstruction of justice. President Trump fueled the fire with a series of tweets Friday morning, including one that seemed to confirm he is being investigated, although over the weekend Trump's attorney said that the President is not under investigation.
- The Republican-led government still seems to be making no progress towards major legislative accomplishments. The infrastructure plan specifics still have not been released, House and Senate Republicans have significant differences of opinion on how to do tax reform, and private Senate Republican discussions on replacing the Affordable Care Act have yet to yield any public progress.