



International Right of Way Association Weekly Update

Monday, June 26, 2017

### Trump Administration

- It was Technology Week at the White House. On Wednesday, the White House Office of American Innovation, which is led by Jared Kushner, launched the American Technology Council with a meeting of 18 technology company CEOs, 3 university presidents, and other tech leaders. The theme was modernizing the government, such as updating the procurement process. The President personally led an afternoon roundtable discussion. <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/jun/19/donald-trump-welcomes-technology-executives-to-who/>
- Also on Wednesday, the President traveled to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, to give a speech about his administration's support for agriculture; however, the speech sounded more like one of his campaign rallies than a substantive discussion of farm policy. <http://www.cnn.com/2017/06/21/politics/trump-iowa-rally/index.html> Full text: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/06/22/remarks-president-trump-agricultural-innovation-cedar-rapids-ia>
- The President also welcomed President Poroshenko of Ukraine and President Juan Carlos Varela of Panama to the White House during separate visits, and hosted the annual Congressional picnic on the South Lawn of the White House.
- Vice President Pence spoke to the National Association of Manufacturers in D.C. and reiterated the President's commitment to "making historic investments" in infrastructure. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/06/20/remarks-vice-president-pence-national-association-manufacturers-summit>

### Congress

- Congress continues moving forward on the FY18 appropriations process, even though a budget resolution is still not finalized. House Budget Chairwoman Diane Black (R-TN-6) continues to meet with various interests in the Republican conference in an effort to find a path forward between military hawks who want more defense spending and fiscal conservatives who support stricter spending limits for all discretionary spending. In the meantime, House Appropriations Subcommittees are marking up their bills in anticipation of the budget being completed in the next few weeks.
- Senate Republicans unveiled their healthcare bill on Thursday, and Majority Leader McConnell (R-KY) is determined to get a bill passed before the July 4 recess. However, with a slim 52-48 majority in the Senate, McConnell can only lose a couple of Republican Senators and still pass the bill. As of Friday, five Republican Senators publicly said they cannot vote for the bill as currently drafted.

- House Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman Bill Shuster (R-PA 9) introduced a bipartisan Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reform bill on Thursday, and committee activity continues to be focused on that bill, with a markup scheduled for Tuesday, June 27. Of interest, the draft includes an increase in authorized funding for the Airport Improvement Program (AIP), which pays for infrastructure like runways, of \$467 million each fiscal year through 2023 for a total annual level of \$3.8 billion. This bill includes a proposal to privatize the nation's air traffic control system, which remains controversial. <https://www.bna.com/house-faa-reauthorization-n73014453696/>
- Senate Commerce Committee Chairman John Thune (R-SC) also introduced a bipartisan FAA reform bill on Thursday, and that committee markup is scheduled for Thursday, June 29. Of interest, the draft increases authorized funding for the AIP by \$400 million to an annual level of \$3.75 billion (well within the projected trust fund surplus), and requires the FAA to conduct a study and provide recommendations on upgrading and restoring the nation's airport infrastructure.
- It is unclear how these two bills will be reconciled, given the fundamental difference in either privatizing the nation's air traffic control system or maintaining the status quo. The Administration has supported the privatization proposal. The chairman and ranking member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation both oppose the privatization proposals. Chairman Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL-25) does not want to lose congressional control of funding for the system, because that allows for oversight of issues like higher fees or noise complaints. <http://thehill.com/policy/transportation/338906-proposal-to-privatize-air-traffic-control-struggles-to-win-over-critics>

### Analysis

- Discord over government funding levels in the budget directly impacts other legislative priorities. Congress must pass a budget resolution in order to use the reconciliation process for tax reform. This reconciliation process requires only 51 votes in the Senate for the legislation to pass, versus the 60 required through the normal legislative process. Additionally, the House is still considering whether to roll some of the 12 individual appropriations bills into one large omnibus or a few smaller bills in order to expedite the appropriations process on the House floor.
- The Senate will be consumed by healthcare this week, as McConnell tries to find the sweet spot of changes to the bill just unveiled Thursday in order to entice his GOP Senators to vote yes. That is extremely challenging, since some Senators oppose the bill because it cuts Medicaid too much, and others say it does not go far enough to repeal the Affordable Care Act.
- The delay in moving forward on the budget, healthcare, and tax reform could push the timeframe for infrastructure legislation to even later this year or next.