



International Right of Way Association Weekly Update

Monday, September 4, 2017

Trump Administration

- On Wednesday, state and local officials met with Secretary Chao, Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney, and other senior White House officials to discuss the Administration's infrastructure plans. Administration officials provided little new information, reiterating that the Administration's plans include leveraging \$200 billion in federal funds to achieve a \$1 trillion infrastructure investment overall, emphasizing the need for rural funding, and expressing a desire to dedicate some funds towards "transformative" projects, specifically naming the Hyperloop technology as an example. <http://thehill.com/policy/transportation/348613-white-house-briefs-state-local-officials-on-trumps-infrastructure-plan>
- The President gave a speech in Missouri on Wednesday to begin making the case for tax reform. He said that tax reform is the "foundation of our job creation agenda." As with the infrastructure meeting, the speech did not provide additional detail on the specifics of the White House's plans. <http://www.cnn.com/2017/08/30/politics/trump-tax-reform-springfield-missouri/>
- The President is requesting nearly \$8 billion from Congress in supplemental appropriations for Hurricane Harvey relief. <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/09/02/548100168/trump-asks-congress-for-7-85-billion-in-harvey-relief-ahead-of-second-trip-to-re>

Congress

- Congress returns to DC this week to begin what is possibly the most critical legislative work period in recent memory. By the end of September, Congress must take action to fund the government, raise the debt ceiling, reauthorize the federal flood insurance program, and consider supplemental funding for Hurricane Harvey relief.

Analysis

- While September may be of crucial importance for the Republican-controlled Congress, an equally important dynamic is the way the President and Republican Leadership in Congress work together (or don't) on tax reform. After the failure of the Republican health care bill, the President made it clear that he laid the blame at the feet of

Republican Leadership. Whether he postures for a similar move on tax reform will forecast how interested he actually is in working to enact the first reform of the tax code in thirty years, as well as his interest in advancing policy priorities, such as infrastructure.

- In his speech on Wednesday, the President called out Missouri Senator Claire McCaskill, saying that if she doesn't help deliver tax reform, she should be voted out of office. Given the toxic relationship the President has with Senate Majority Leader McConnell, it is fair to conclude that the President was leveling this threat at McConnell even more directly than he was at McCaskill. The fact that Leader McConnell is not up for reelection this cycle is immaterial, as the threat is clear—if he fails to deliver the President's agenda, the President believes that he should not continue to serve as the Republican Leader. Other Republicans who have drawn the President's ire for one reason or another are also finding themselves confronted with a Pro-Trump primary challenge (in Dean Heller's case) or at the very least, with thinly veiled threats from the President himself (in the cases of John McCain and Jeff Flake).
- The President plans to sit down with congressional leaders on Tuesday to discuss tax reform, but his top advisors have already said that they will leave it up to the tax-writing Committees in Congress to come up with the details of the plan. <http://www.politico.com/story/2017/08/24/white-house-defers-to-congress-tax-details-242011>. While Congressional procedure dictates that the House Ways and Means Committee has the pen on tax reform legislation, this message from the Administration's most senior officials seems to be setting the President up to be able to pass the blame to Congress if and when tax reform fails, instead of merely recognizing the realities of congressional procedure.