



## International Right of Way Association Weekly Update

Monday, January 21, 2019

### Government Shutdown

- The shutdown continues and the tactics have only gotten more toxic this week.
- On Wednesday, Speaker Pelosi sent a letter to the President asking that the State of the Union address, which is historically held in the House Chamber, be rescheduled from the current January 29<sup>th</sup> date or delivered in writing so long as the shutdown continues.
- On Thursday, the President denied Speaker Pelosi the use of a military aircraft she was planning to use for a trip to Afghanistan.
- On Saturday, the President announced that he would be delivering an address from the Oval Office proposing to provide temporary protection for certain undocumented immigrants in exchange for his requested \$5.7 billion in border security funding. Speaker Pelosi rejected the offer before the President even delivered the remarks.
- There are no media reports of the President and the Speaker even discussing a way to end the shutdown at this point.

### Trump Administration

- The President focused on his commitment to infrastructure with his Cabinet on Friday, discussing how to incorporate it into the State of the Union address.  
<https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-trump-infrastructure-exclusive/exclusive-trump-meets-with-cabinet-officials-to-revive-infrastructure-push-sources-idUKKCN1PC1A5>
- The President's nominee for Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, current Acting Administrator Andrew Wheeler, had his confirmation hearing before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee last week. Wheeler cruised through the expected questions without raising any red flags.
- The President's nominee for Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration, Nicole Nason, is currently being vetted by Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Members and staff and her confirmation hearing should be scheduled imminently.

### Congress

- Both Chambers are in session this week after cancelling the previously-scheduled State Work Period.

### Analysis

- Thousands of transportation professionals from federal, state, and local levels of government as well as the private sector descended on Washington, DC last week for the annual Transportation Research Board conference. During one of the sessions, Maryland Transportation Secretary Pete Rahn stated that “the fuel tax has become so toxic that it is not the way that we should be funding transportation in this country.”  
<https://www.ttnews.com/articles/state-dot-leaders-urge-federal-action-long-term-infrastructure-funding>
- Rahn’s statement at TRB is noteworthy because he was addressing the primary recipients of federal transportation funds and recommending they abandon what has been their primary source of revenue over the last 60 years. This demonstrates how the toxicity of our politics is impacting transportation policy and legislation.
- House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Peter DeFazio (D-OR) and Ranking Member Sam Graves (R-MO) are both champions of exploring a vehicle-miles traveled concept as a potential replacement for the gas tax. However, the longer the shutdown lasts and the worse the relationship gets between the White House and House Democrats, the less likely it is that there will be a window of opportunity to work together on infrastructure this year.