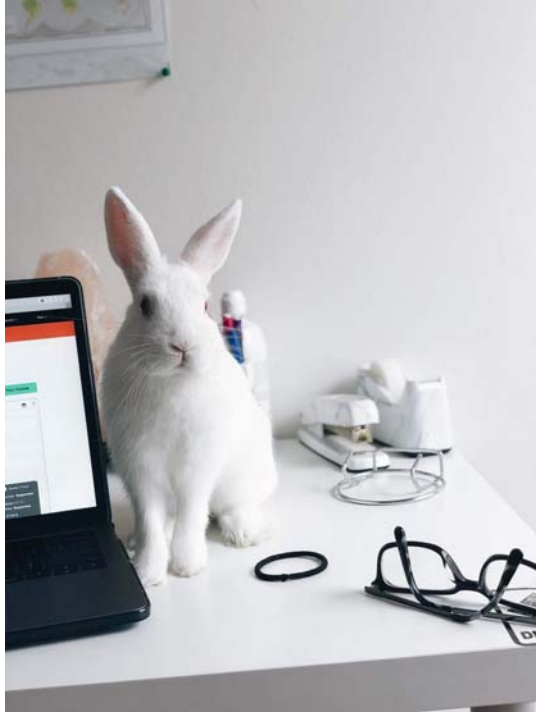




August 21, 2020



THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON:

Rabbit, Rabbit

Sandwiched between the two major American political parties' national conventions this week and next is the House addressing proposed changes to the Postal Service ahead of this year's general election. The legislation, to be voted on tomorrow, is focused expressly on support to the Postal Service and reversing changes implemented earlier this year. Earlier this week, more than 100 Democrats signed on to a letter asking to also schedule a vote for Saturday on legislation to extend enhanced unemployment insurance on a time frame tied to economic indicators, such as the unemployment rate.

This tactic was rejected by House leadership who still seek to pass a larger coronavirus relief bill, believing that passing a standalone unemployment relief bill would undercut negotiations on other aspects of a coronavirus relief package, including funding for state and local governments.

Meanwhile, the Senate GOP is preparing new "skinny" legislation which includes \$300 in weekly unemployment insurance, additional funding for K-12 schools and colleges and universities, a COVID-19 vaccine, drug development and distribution, and testing and contact tracing. It would not provide any additional direct state and local government aid. It is currently expected that Republicans will attach this COVID-19 aid bill to a stopgap funding resolution in September when back in session.

More News from the Nation's Capital...

DHS OIG Report on Improper FEMA Payments for SBA Dependent Other Needs Assistance

The Office of the Inspector General for the Department of Homeland Security conducted an audit of FEMA's Individuals and Households Program (IHP) Other Needs Assistance (ONA) payments. The audit

found that the program has no assurance of applicants' eligibility for Small Business Administration (SBA) Dependent Other Needs Assistance payments. When there is no documentation or verification to support an eligibility payment decision it is considered improper by the OIG. It found that FEMA did not collect sufficient income and dependent documentation or verify self-reported information to determine whether applicants below the income threshold, known as Failed Income Test (FIT), were eligible for SBA Dependent ONA payments as FEMA believed requiring documentation or verification would delay the disbursement of assistance. The agency instead relied on an honor system to make eligibility and payment decisions. The OIG determined, according to FEMA-provided data, it has paid more than \$3.3 billion in improper payments to applicants deemed as FIT for SBA Dependent ONA since 2003.

The OIG is making three recommendations:

- Implement a process to collect income and dependent documentation on SBA Dependent ONA applicants to make sure payments are proper;
- Implement a verification process to ensure accuracy of income and dependent information provided by SBA dependent ONA applicants; and
- Include SBA Dependent ONA as susceptible to significant improper payments subject to annual improper payments estimation and reporting.

FEMA strongly disagreed with the methodology and recommendations.

[View the report here.](#)

Members of Congress Press POTUS on National Guard and FEMA Cost-Sharing Requirements

Dozens of Members of Congress are requesting that President Trump immediately waive National Guard and FEMA cost-sharing requirements for all states and territories amid the national COVID-19 pandemic response. The letter also notes concern that a small number of states have been granted full coverage of National Guard funding through the end of the calendar or fiscal year while a majority of states and territories have not. It also voices concerns about the ongoing cost-shares for FEMA-eligible assistance in light of SLTT government resource shortfalls caused by pandemic impacts.

The letter also includes support for the decision to extend Title 32 status for the National Guard through the end of the year.

[View the full letter here.](#)

CDC COVID-19 Law Lab Published

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) launched a new interactive website that collects and shares legal documents from more than 190 countries to aid policymakers in establishing strong legal frameworks to manage the pandemic. The project offers free toolkits and a database of law and policy documents. Searchable legal topics include isolation and quarantine measures, movement and distancing restrictions, disease surveillance and technology, and states of emergency, among others.

[View the COVID-19 Law Lab here.](#)

Other News from DC and Around the Country:

E&E News: [Why FEMA Doesn't Wilt in Trump's Political Heat](#)

CSG Midwest: [New Lessons on How to Work Through Crises Together: COVID-19 Pandemic Strained Usual Interstate Resource Sharing During Emergencies, But Underscored Value of Cross-Border Cooperation](#)

Miami Herald: [Florida and Miami-Dade Change Plans to Host Hurricane Evacuees in Hotel Rooms](#)



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