



January 28, 2022



THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON: High Court Drama

We are going to place Congress to the side for now as the Supreme Court ripples the water here in DC this week. Supreme Court Justice Breyer is expected to retire at the end of the current term. This would leave the seat open for a nomination by President Biden, likely before the elections later this year. Additional interest is added to this when you consider the recent inability to find unity among the 50 Democratic Senators – something that would be required for the President's party to confirm a nomination to the high court.

On Wednesday, the Federal Reserve announced that it will not hike interest rates at the moment – but there are hints that raises could be coming in March. This comes as the U.S. is facing the highest inflation rate it has seen in decades, recently hitting the 7% mark, and as markets across the board are seeing major dips. The Federal Reserve released a [post-committee statement](#) on the decision. This economic fluidity continues impacting mitigation and other construction projects across the country.

House and Senate Appropriations leaders are currently working behind the scenes on an omnibus spending bill. With the February 18 deadline approaching next month, both sides will need to come to terms with a topline number before they can move forward – failure to do so would require an additional continuing resolution to keep the government funded. The current rumor mill is talking about another likely short-term extension, possibly to as late as April 7 (is that really “short-term”?). Another compounding factor on this issue is the delayed budget from the White House which officials say we won't see until early March.

Today at 3pm ET is the deadline for the Flood Management Assistance and BRIC Program applications – so make sure you cross those T's and dot your I's and get those applications submitted!

Hearings the Week of January 31, 2022

[The Dynamic Landscape of Terrorism and What It Means for America](#)

House Committee on Homeland Security
Wednesday, February 2, 2022 at 10am ET

More News from the Nation's Capital...

Biden Administration Announce Over \$1B in DRF for Post-Wildfire & Hurricane Recovery

Last week, Vice President Harris and USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack announced \$1.36 billion for the USDA Forest Service to support post-disaster recovery and restoration in states across the country, including nearly \$600 million for recovery efforts in California following the devastating 2020 and 2021 fire years.

The Forest Service will utilize these recovery dollars for hazardous material cleanup, reforestation, watershed restoration, and infrastructure repair including for trails, roads, bridges and facilities. Additional projects will focus on reforestation and restoration, including to collect cones and seeds, increase tree nursery production, and provide tree seedlings and technical assistance to landowners, Tribes, and communities to restore burned areas.

Visit the full [USDA press release](#) for more information on the funding.

OMB Releases Strategy to Move the U.S. Towards a Zero-Trust Architecture

On Wednesday, OMB released an updated strategy to move the country towards a “zero trust” architecture (ZTA) approach to cybersecurity. This release from OMB stands as a result of President Biden's Executive Order on Improving the Nation's Cybersecurity, an order that was created to enforce changes and make progress towards increasing the federal government's ability to reduce the frequency of and success of cyber-attacks against the nation's digital infrastructure.

The [full memorandum](#) outlines what steps the Administration will be taking to secure our digital infrastructure and what a ZTA looks like in the U.S.

GAO Reports Improvements Are Needed for Overseeing Relief Funds Responses

On Thursday, GAO released a report stating that there needs to be significant improvements for oversight of relief funds and responses to public health emergencies. The CARES Act includes a provision for GAO to report on its ongoing and oversight efforts related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This report, GAO's ninth, examines the federal government's continued efforts to respond to, and recover from, the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of the report, GAO makes five recommendations to federal agencies involved in response efforts: The Treasury Department, OMB, Department of Food and Nutrition, and the IRS. These recommendations generally pertain to increased oversight and audit of pandemic related programs within these departments.

You can find more information on the recommendations in the [highlights](#) of the report, or in the [full report](#).

Agriculture Secretary Released 10-Year Wildfire Strategy

Last week, Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack launched a comprehensive response to the nation's growing wildfire crisis – [“Confronting the Wildfire Crisis: A Strategy for Protecting Communities and Improving Resilience in America's Forests.”](#) The strategy outlines the need to significantly increase fuels and forest health treatments to address the escalating crisis of wildfire danger that threatens millions of acres and numerous communities across the United States.

Late last year, NEMA testified in front of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee on the state of federal wildfire programs and what steps our Association recommended be taken to better facilitate a more responsible and effective wildfire response framework. Greater steps towards prevention, rather than response, to these wildfires was part of those recommendations and believe these are steps in the right direction.

For the full press release by the Department of Agriculture, click [here](#).

FEMA Grant Systems to Use New Identifier

A big change is coming soon that affects grant applicants and recipients in FEMA grants management systems, including the new grants system FEMA Grants Outcomes (FEMA GO). FEMA GO will allow users to apply, track and manage all disaster and non-disaster grants and currently supports firefighter, emergency responder and pre-disaster mitigation grants.

On April 4, the federal government will stop using the Dun & Bradstreet number (DUNS) to uniquely identify entities registered in the System for Award Management (SAM). After April 4, entities doing business with the federal government will use a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) created in SAM.gov. New organizations that register with SAM.gov will be given the UEI number.

Additional information about UEI and FEMA GO is provided in the [FEMA GO Startup Guide for Assistance to Firefighters Grants Program](#) and the [FEMA GO Startup Guide for Hazard Mitigation Assistance Grants](#).

Other News from DC and Around the Country:

CBS: [DHS says U.S. on "Heightened Alert" for Russian Cyberattack](#)
Route Fifty: [Biden's Infrastructure Czar Offers Tips for Cities Seeking Grants](#)
Route Fifty: [Feds Unveil New Plan to Combat Wildfire Dangers](#)

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