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## THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON:

### A Senate Divided

The centerpiece of President Biden's initial legislative plans is passing a \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package which would include \$350 billion for state and local governments to increase testing, support vaccine distribution, and reopen schools. The bill would also fund a national vaccination program and an increased public health workforce. A significant portion of the legislation is targeted toward individual and family assistance, with an additional round of \$1,400 checks for individuals, the extension of pandemic unemployment programs, rental assistance and eviction moratoriums, and an increased minimum wage.

Given Congress' previous challenges surrounding passing coronavirus relief, it is unlikely a bill of this size would have the remotest chance of bipartisan support and success. The bipartisan Senate "908 group" continues to meet to develop a package that is amenable to both sides, but given the months required for the last bipartisan agreement Democratic leadership in the House and Senate is laying the groundwork to achieve as much as possible from the proposed relief package via the budget reconciliation process.

A primer: budget reconciliation is a fast-track procedure that cannot be filibustered and has only limited opportunities for debates and amendments, making it an attractive option for the speedy passage of legislation. The catch is that it must facilitate governing mandatory spending and revenues, which limits the contents of the legislation that can be passed in this manner. First up in the process is developing a concurrent budget resolution between the House and Senate. The House is expected to vote on its budget resolution next week. Those who are bullish on using the reconciliation process in this circumstance are also looking to the Senate for passage of an amended budget resolution next week, but this is ambitious and the process may be slightly delayed to allow senators more time to negotiate a compromise coronavirus relief bill.

Budget reconciliation was last successfully used by a republican majority Senate to pass the 2017 tax cut bill. It is widely regarded as a partisan tool – and not likely to be looked upon as negotiating in good faith by the republican side of the chamber.

In what will hopefully be a more bipartisan process, DHS Secretary-designate Mayorkas will be considered by the full Senate on Monday evening. It is widely expected that he will be confirmed and become the first Senate-confirmed DHS Secretary since April 2019.

#### Hearings the Week of February 1, 2021

[No Time to Lose: Solutions to Increase COVID-19 Vaccinations in the States](#)

House Committee on Energy & Commerce  
Tuesday, February 2, 11:00am ET

[Road to Recovery: Ramping Up COVID-19 Vaccines, Testing, and Medical Supply Chain](#)

House Committee on Energy & Commerce  
Wednesday, February 3, 11:00am ET

[Examining the Domestic Terrorism Threat in the Wake of the Attack on the U.S. Capitol](#)

House Committee on Homeland Security  
Thursday, February 4, 10:00am ET

*More News from the Nation's Capital...*

#### House Appropriations Committee Announces Subcommittee Assignments

This week House Appropriations Committee (HAC) Chair Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) and Ranking Member Kay Granger (R-TX) announced the rosters for subcommittees within the appropriations committee for the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress. Key to emergency management is the Homeland Security subcommittee, which will again be chaired by Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA) and the ranking member will be Rep. Chuck Fleischmann (R-TN). The other subcommittee members are Rep Henry Cuellar (D-TX), Rep. Lauren Underwood (D-IL), Rep. David E. Price (D-NC), Rep. C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger (D-MD), Rep. Mike Quigley (D-IL), Rep. Pete Aguilar (D-CA), Rep. Steven Palazzo (R-MS), Rep. John Rutherford (R-FL), and Rep. Ashley Hinson (R-IA).

There have been internal discussions in recent years about where congressional jurisdiction for FEMA should reside, with some advocating its transfer from the House Transportation & Infrastructure (T&I) Committee to the Homeland Security Committee based on its jurisdiction over many other DHS components. It was announced this week that the current structure will be maintained, with the agreement that to the extent most practicable, committees with jurisdictions including DHS components will work in coordination with the Homeland Security Committee on relevant issues and vice versa. [Read the memorandum here.](#)

#### GAO Releases Report on Challenges in Federal Pandemic Response

As part of its ongoing series of reports on the federal pandemic response, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a report on the ongoing implementation of the CARES Act and other pandemic relief measures.

Key areas GAO flagged for improvement are: vaccine rollout, testing, data collection, medical and drug supply chains, and strengthening program integrity and protecting against fraud. Some new recommendations include establishing a process for the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) to regularly engage SLTT governments and private industry as part of the development and implementation of a pandemic preparedness supply chain strategy, developing a publicly available COVID-19 national testing strategy, utilizing an expert committee to review and inform the alignments of data collection, and that ASPR should accurately report procurement data and spending on procurement contracts.

Read the [recommendations here](#) and the [full report here](#).

#### Climate Day and Presidential Executive Orders

The Biden Administration declared Wednesday "Climate Day" and signed multiple executive orders related to mitigating the impacts of climate change in the U.S. Included in these executive orders was a directive that FEMA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) study how the government can expand and improve climate forecast capabilities and public information products, as well as a directive for federal agencies to make plans to increase their facility and operational resilience to climate change with an accompanying requirement that each agency must have a federal action plan within four months describing its climate vulnerabilities. Also, agencies will be tasked with protecting supply chains against climate risks and disruptions that could affect manufacturing or consumer access.

One EO also established the Civilian Climate Corps Initiative to create a program for restoring public lands through reforestation and other biodiversity strategies.

View the full list of [presidential actions to date here](#).

#### DHS National Terrorism Advisory System Bulletin Released

DHS released a National Terrorism Advisory System (NTAS) Bulletin related to the increased threat of domestic violent extremists (DVEs) with objections to the exercise of governmental authority and the presidential transition, among other perceived grievances. This mobilization to violence has coincided with increased threats of violence against critical infrastructure, including the electric, telecommunications, and healthcare sectors due to misinformation and conspiracy theories about COVID-19.

DHS noted concerns about actors emboldened by the January 6<sup>th</sup> Capitol breach and that the threat posed by homegrown violent extremists (HVEs) remains. These threats are expected to last through early 2021 and beyond.

[View the Bulletin here.](#)

*Other News from DC and Around the Country:*

Urban Institute: [Housing and CDBG-DR](#)  
Journal of Emergency Management: [A Better Approach to Managing COVID-19 and its Effects](#)  
The National Academies of Sciences: [Informing the New Administration: Ending the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Path to Recovery](#)

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