



April 16, 2021



## THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON:

### Progress and Setbacks

Seems most of Congress spent their Easter Recess honing messaging and preparing to come back to try those new talking points out on each other. First off this week, though, and big bit of progress for the emergency management community as the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee moved Deanne Criswell's nomination for FEMA Administrator one step closer to the finish line. On Wednesday, the Committee marked-up her nomination and moved it to the floor for full Senate consideration. The timeline on when she will be ready to take-up residence at 500 C Street remains to be seen, but with no known holds on her nomination at this point, the process could be swift.

Beyond that, the headlines in D.C. amounted to political jockeying for who will be the 200 Members and staff to be able to attend the President's joint session of Congress on April 28, an ongoing debate about earmarks, and strategies on handling the upcoming infrastructure package.

With House Democrats being the first to blast through any remaining earmark (or the new "Community Funded Projects") limitations, House Republicans followed suit not wanting to be left out of the fun. All eyes then turned to the Senate. Republicans particularly in the upper chamber seem at war with themselves as to whether the practice should be restored. They may not want to miss out on the excitement, but could also stand firm and let their House counterparts do the dirty work for them. Time will tell.

Speaking of Appropriations, we could expect "three months of boredom followed by six weeks of sheer terror." The first issue is the delayed President's Budget Request which we may not see until closer to Memorial Day. Then there's the issue of working through mountains of earmark requests (whoops, I mean "Community Funded Projects"), the lack of spending levels having been set yet, and an ever-shrinking inventory of time. At this point, rumors are scant about the overall process, but clarity will come once we get a sense of how committees plan to react to the President's Budget Request.

The two-part \$2 trillion infrastructure package introduced by the White House recently is causing strategic headaches on the Hill. Do they do both pieces of it at once? Will Republicans play along with one or both pieces? Will Democrats give on any Republican priorities? Will the reconciliation process need to be used again on one or both aspects? This strategic discussion continues with Senator Chris Coon (D-DE) acting as one of the main conduits between the White House and Senate Republicans. How to pay for the package remains one of the biggest overall issues both sides will need to address in the coming weeks.

#### Hearings the Week of April 19, 2021

##### [Oversight of the DHS Office of Inspector General](#)

House Homeland Security Committee  
Wednesday, April 21, 9:30am ET

##### [Sustainable Wastewater Infrastructure: Measures to Promote Resiliency, Climate Adaptation, & Mitigation](#)

House Transportation & Infrastructure Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment  
Wednesday, April 21, 11:00am ET

##### [Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Request for the Department of Housing and Urban Development](#)

House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development  
Wednesday, April 21, 2:00pm ET

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

#### NEMA to Co-Host Webinar on Virus Variants and "Next Steps"

On Thursday, April 29 at 2:00pm EDT, NEMA is co-hosting a webinar with the Center for Homeland Defense and Security, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, and IAEM entitled *What Comes Next? Virus Variants, Vaccine Next Steps, and Preventing Future Pandemics*. The discussion will examine what is next in the U.S. response to COVID-19, from the "last mile" of vaccine distribution to what the pandemic could mean for community resilience and global health in the years to come. Panelists include:

- **Dr. Rick Bright**, Member, Biden COVID-19 Advisory Board and Senior Vice President of Pandemic Prevention and Response, The Rockefeller Foundation
- **Tim Manning**, COVID-19 Supply Coordinator, White House COVID Response Team
- **Eileen O'Connor** -- Moderator, Legal and Communications Subject Matter Expert, Center for Homeland Defense and Security.

More information, including how to register can be found [here](#).

#### Senate Holds Hearing on Pandemic Lessons Learned

On Wednesday, the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee (HSGAC) held a hearing entitled *Preparedness for COVID-19: The Initial Pandemic Response and Lessons Learned*. During the hearing, members heard from witnesses who included:

- The Honorable Nicole Lurie, M.D., Former Assistance Secretary for Preparedness and Response at the Department of Health and Human Services
- Julie Gerberding, M.D., Former Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at the Department of Health and Human Services
- The Honorable Joe Nimmich, Former Deputy Administrator of FEMA
- Elizabeth Zimmerman, Former Associate Administrator of FEMA for the Office and Response and Recovery

From the former FEMA leadership, Nimmich drew from his experience in helping develop the recent report completed by the Business Executives for National Security. He highlighted how COVID came as no surprise given previous findings of exercises such as Crimson Contagion and cited issues such as deficiencies in planning and exercises and an inability to surge capabilities. He recommended the creation of a Civilian Expertise Review Program modeled after the National Guard to deploy experts and a redesign of FEMA's NRCC to develop a "Surge Center."

Zimmerman drew on her experiences to stress the importance of public and private sectors working together; improve planning assumptions; and better integrate federal and state assumptions in planning. She recommended a strategic review of plans, clearer guidance on lead federal agency status, better data management and forecasting, improvements to the Strategic National Stockpile, and better coordination on federal assistance provided.

Witness statements and the hearing can be viewed [here](#).

#### Webinar on Dual Disaster Events

As communities enter the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic and prepare for spring flooding and hurricane season, the threat of dual disaster events persists. Representatives from the American Flood Coalition and the American Public Health Association will be conducting a webinar on April 21 at 1:00pm ET on lessons learned over the past year, resources for communities preparing for potential dual disasters, and the importance of preparedness in 2021. They will also be discussing a [Dual Disaster Handbook](#) the associations recently released which is meant to be a practical guide for local leaders facing flooding during COVID-19.

You can register for and learn more about the event [here](#).

*Other News from DC and Around the Country:*

WGN9 (Chicago): [FEMA's Funeral Program Overwhelmed by 1 Million Calls on First Day](#)  
Morning Call (State Director OpEd): [Voters Should Let Governor Retain Control During a Crisis](#)  
KXXV (Texas): [Texas Holds Tax-Free Weekend for Emergency Preparation Supplies](#)

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