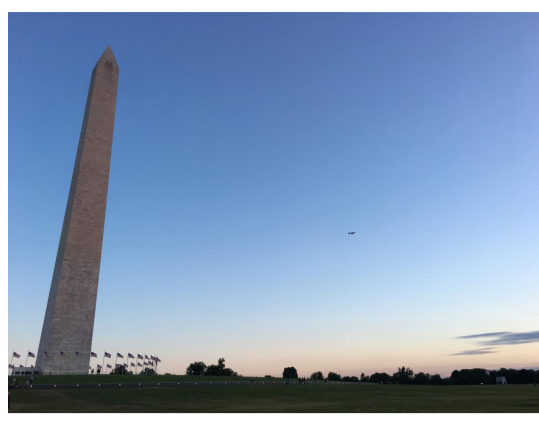




September 24, 2021



THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON:

Budget Extensions -- A Time Honored Tradition

In the midst of a continued stalemate over the new budget package, the House passed the Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act (H.R. 5305), a continuing resolution to extend FY2021 funding levels until December 3. Attached to this continuing resolution is a suspension of the national debt limit. This debt limit suspension creates uncertainty for the bill's trajectory in the Senate, as Senate Republicans have already said that they were against adjusting the debt limit.

While the legislation is extending the current FY2021 funding levels, H.R. 5305 also gives special attention to several annual NEMA priorities. **The bill provides \$50 million in increased funding for Emergency Management Performance Grants and allows FEMA to access the full annual appropriation for the DRF for FY2022.** The bill also forgives outstanding balances of FEMA Community Disaster Loans as of September 30, 2021. See the House Appropriations Committee press release regarding H.R. 5305 [here](#). A link to the Extending Government Funding and Delivery Emergency Assistance Act can be found [here](#) - and a summary of the bill can be found [here](#).

More News from the Nation's Capital...

Funding Opportunities for Hazard Mitigation and Faith-Based and Community Leaders

As part of National Preparedness Month, the DHS Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships is partnering with FEMA to host a webinar to provide information about funding opportunities for hazard mitigation projects and recent changes to recovery programs to increase equity. This webinar, being held on September 30, 2021, will be virtual and has a variety of FEMA Directors scheduled to be panelists. Registration for this webinar can be completed [here](#).

Inspector General Report: Lessons Learned from FEMA's Initial COVID-19 Response

This week, the Inspector General released a [report](#) highlighting several findings related to FEMA's initial response to COVID-19. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, FEMA worked closely with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and other Federal agencies to facilitate the shipment of PPE and ventilators. However, the magnitude of the global event exposed weaknesses in FEMA's resource request system and allocation processes. Specifically, WebEOC — the system FEMA used to process resource requests including those for PPE and ventilators — contained unreliable data to inform allocation decisions and ensure requests were accurately adjudicated. This occurred because FEMA did not develop controls to validate requests and prevent incomplete, inaccurate, or duplicate data entries; nor did FEMA ensure WebEOC users received training on proper use of the system. In addition, although FEMA developed a process to allocate the limited supply of ventilators, it did not have a similarly documented process for PPE.

Finally, FEMA did not have strategic guidance clearly outlining the roles and responsibilities used to lead the Federal response. FEMA's decision to prioritize ongoing pandemic response efforts without updating its written guidance and strategic plans hindered FEMA's coordination efforts. To its credit, FEMA evaluated its COVID-19 response operations, identifying similar key findings and recommendations aimed at improving current and future responses, including making updates to its WebEOC system.

DHS Secretary Extends US-Mexico Border Restrictions

On Wednesday, DHS Secretary Mayorkas announced that the department would continue the closure of the US's border with Mexico for nonessential travel to October 21, 2021. In the notice, Secretary Mayorkas outlined "essential travel" to include educational, medical, and work purposes. With the original restrictions being put in place in March 2020, and the most recent extension in August 2021, this extension continues the pattern of trying to control border crossings as an attempt to keep the looming threat of COVID-19 and Delta variant transmission at a minimum. This notice does come days after the Biden Administration announced a plan to relax restrictions for fully vaccinated travelers. The official notice, posted to the Federal Register on September 22, can be found [here](#).

New National Flood Insurance Program Roll-Out Begins Next Month

Beginning on October 1, FEMA will be implementing Risk Rating 2.0. This is the new National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) rating system with the goal of making flood insurance rates fairer, more transparent, and more closely aligned with actual flood risk. In the lead-up to the first phase of RR2.0 implementation, Pew Charitable Trusts is working with numerous groups in support of this modernization to how the NFIP calculates flood insurance premiums. Along with this roll-out, Pew Charitable Trusts and the Association of State Floodplain Managers have released this [interactive map](#) that illustrates the changes to insurance rates down to the local level. [Here](#) is a summary of the RR2.0 program.

Other News from DC and Around the Country:

Governing (Opinion): [The High-Stakes Dilemma of America's Everyday Infrastructure](#)

CBS News: [U.S. To Probe Incidents Involving Border Agents on Horseback Dispersing Haitians](#)

The Hill (Opinion): [New Flood Insurance Program to Cut Premiums for a Million Policyholders](#)

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