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Sent: Friday, July 29, 2016 11:21 AM
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Subject: Washington Update

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WASHINGTON UPDATE

JULY 29, 2016

ALARM OVER NEW ZIKA VIRUS INFECTIONS AND FEDERAL FUNDING

In what may be the first group of documented cases of domestically transmitted Zika virus in the United States, Florida Governor Rick Scott said four residents who live in Miami-Dade and Broward counties have come down with the illness. While the virus has been spreading throughout South America and the Caribbean, there have been no known infections, until now, in the United States that can be traced to domestic mosquito bites. None of the mosquitoes tested to date in Florida have come up with Zika. More than 1,650 people in the United States have been identified with the Zika virus -- all of these cases, however, involve infections that occurred abroad. The Food and Drug Administration has requested a suspension of all blood donations in the region of Miami-Dade and Broward counties until donations can be tested for the virus.

Florida Senator Marco Rubio sent a letter dated July 28 to the Obama Administration requesting that current anti-Zika funds be drawn down more urgently to combat the spread of the virus. According to the Office of Management and Budget, the Administration is sitting on \$384 million, which was reallocated from the Ebola campaign. Senator Rubio has bucked his own GOP Senate colleagues and thrown his full support behind President Obama's \$1.9 billion request to fight the Zika virus. The Administration's anti-Zika funding request has been bogged down in Congress, which adjourned for their annual summer recess without taking final steps to resolve the matter.

EPA MOVES TOWARD REGULATING AIRPLANE EMISSIONS

Earlier this week, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued an "endangerment finding" concluding that greenhouse gas emissions from airplanes "endangers the public health" of current and future generations of Americans. The finding represents the first-step in EPA's regulatory process to control greenhouse gases released by the aviation industry. A final rule on the matter is not expected to be drafted until sometime in 2018. According to the EPA, airplanes account for three percent of total greenhouse gas emissions in the United States and are the third largest contributor of emissions in the US transportation sector. The EPA action will be limited to large aircraft and does not cover small turboprop or recreational planes, helicopters or military aircraft.

CONGRESSIONAL AND ELECTION CALENDAR

Now that the pageantry of the Republican and Democratic conventions are over, the respective presidential nominees for each party are off to the races with just 101-days left before the election. Congress will reconvene after Labor Day for a couple of weeks before they adjourn, once again, for the November 8 election. All 435 House seats are up for reelection with 1/3 of the Senate under the November ballot as well.

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