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**WASHINGTON UPDATE**

**JULY 14, 2016**

## CONGRESSIONAL DELIBERATIONS OVER FY 2017 SPENDING BILLS

Members of Congress have decamped from the nation's capital for their summer recess without completing work on a host of legislative items including funding to fight the spread of the Zika virus, gun control and government spending. On the spending front, the path forward in avoiding a government shutdown on October 1st looks increasingly like a continuing resolution. The only question is for how long – a couple of months or something more like six months, putting funding decisions until next year for a new president and Congress to handle. House Speaker Paul Ryan is being pressured by the most conservative wing of his party to push for a government spending measure that last through March 2017. House Tea Party stalwarts argue that should Donald Trump win the presidency, they will be in a much stronger position to impose cuts come next year. Tea Party members also want to avoid a congressional lame duck session in which President Obama will have one last shot at shaping and, they argue, "inflating" funding for his preferred federal programs. From a hard right perspective, nothing good comes out of a lame duck session.

GOP House appropriators and defense hawks have made it clear to Speaker Ryan and his leadership team that they want a short-term government funding bill that will allow them to revisit spending allocations for the Pentagon as well as help shape various federal programs for the 2017 fiscal year. Most Senate members, Republicans and Democrats alike, oppose a long-term continuing resolution as well. So when Congress returns to Capitol Hill after Labor Day, we are likely to see, after some tense deliberations, a short-term spending bill that keeps the federal government open until sometime in December.

## CONGRESS PASSES OPIOID ABUSE LEGISLATION

Earlier this week, Congress passed the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016 sending it to the White House for the president's signature. The bill will provide grant money to state, local, and tribal governments to expand opioid abuse services and programs. Some of these services include creating better facilities and programs for drug abusers and equipping first responders with the medicine and skills necessary to handle drug overdose patients. In addition, the bill aims to strengthen communication between law enforcement and substance abuse agencies. Despite widespread bipartisan support, Democrats argue there is still not enough funding to meet the requirements of the bill, but agree with their Republican counterparts that it is a necessary first step in addressing the nation's opioid abuse epidemic.

## HOUSE FREEDOM CAUCUS MOVES FORWARD WITH IRS IMPEACHMENT PROCEEDINGS

In an unusual legislative maneuver, the House Freedom Caucus, the most conservative wing of the House GOP conference, is advancing a procedural motion to impeach Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Commissioner John Koskinen. The privileged resolution, sponsored by Louisiana Republican John Fleming, offers articles of impeachment against Commissioner Koskinen. The parliamentary procedure allows rank-and-file members to circumvent the committee vetting process and their own leadership by forcing a floor vote on the resolution. If a vote is scheduled on the initiative, it is likely to occur in September following a seven-week congressional recess.

The impetus behind the impeachment proceedings stems in large part from the frustration of House tea party members over the perceived lack of cooperation from Commissioner Koskinen in a congressional investigation of his agency's alleged targeting of conservative groups that had applied for tax-exempt status. The House Judiciary Committee, which has jurisdiction over impeachment issues, has held two hearing on the matter but, according to critics, seems to be in no hurry to take additional action.

There are four articles of impeachment filed against Koskinen "for high crimes and misdemeanors." Charges involve making a series of false and misleading statements to Congress; failure to act with "confidence and forthrightness" in overseeing the IRS internal investigation; a failure to respond to congressional subpoenas; and issuing false and misleading statements. In his defense, Commissioner Koskinen issued a statement declaring the allegations against him to be "unwarranted" and "without merit" and that the scope of his actions do not meet the constitutional definition for impeachment.

## FAA EXTENSION BILL IS ADOPTED BY CONGRESS

The House by voice vote and the Senate by a recorded vote of 89 to 4 passed a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) measure extending aviation programs – that were due to expire on July15 -- through September 30, 2017. The adoption of the bill avoids a shutdown of aviation programs while keeping planes in the air during peak summer months and providing for enhanced airport security measures across the country and abroad.

## CONGRESSIONAL CALENDAR

Because of the presidential conventions, the House and Senate begin a seven-week recess and are not scheduled back in session until after Labor Day.

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