

Washington Update November 12, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

While Congress has been out of session this week for a Veteran's Day recess, the action behind the scenes continues to be dominated by the prospects of finalizing the reconciliation bill, or the Build Back Better plan. Educators are eager to see this make it over the finish line, as it includes important investments for education, including \$610 million for the educator pipeline.

1. Bipartisan Infrastructure Heads to President Biden for Signature

Last Friday, all eyes were on the House of Representatives where Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) was working overtime to schedule a vote on both the bipartisan infrastructure bill (which had already passed the Senate) and the partisan reconciliation bill (which has passed neither body but is being intensely negotiated behind the scenes). Pelosi could afford to lose only three Democratic votes and still pass the bills.

As you will recall, Democrats had initially promised to pass the bipartisan infrastructure and reconciliation bills together, but after push back from moderate Democrats, specifically Senators Manchin (D-WV) and Sinema (D-AZ), Congressional leadership ultimately delinked the two bills leading to a vote late last Friday night. The House passed the \$500 billion [bipartisan infrastructure bill](#) (the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act) with 13 Republicans joining Democrats to take it over the finish line – a 228-206 vote. The first part of the Administration's investment agenda now heads to the President for his signature.

A few key provisions in the bill related to education and school infrastructure include:

- A total of \$65 billion for broadband investment to help families access the internet and afford devices (Division F, starting on page 2014);
- \$5 billion for clean-energy school buses (section 71101, starting on page 2386);
- \$500 million over 5 years for competitive grants to schools and non-profits for energy efficiency improvements (section 40541, starting on page 1719);
- \$200 million over 5 years to remove lead contamination in school drinking water, as part of a much bigger drinking water program (section 50110, pages 1929-1934); and
- Reauthorizes and extends until 2023 the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act, which helps fund schools in 700 counties that have federal forest land (section 41202, starting on page 1878).

In a statement the White House praised the legislation stating:

“This Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal will rebuild America’s roads, bridges and rails, expand access to clean drinking water, ensure every American has access to high-speed internet, tackle the climate crisis, advance environmental justice, and invest in communities that have too often been left behind. The legislation will help ease

inflationary pressures and strengthen supply chains by making long overdue improvements for our nation's ports, airports, rail, and roads. It will drive the creation of good-paying union jobs and grow the economy sustainably and equitably so that everyone gets ahead for decades to come."

The White House reports that combined with the President's Build Back Framework, the bipartisan infrastructure bill will add on average 1.5 million jobs per year for the next 10 years.

In the midst of [intense blowback](#) against the 13 House Republicans who voted for the bill, President Biden will sign the legislation on Monday in a ceremony at the White House. Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) has announced that he will not attend, however some of the House Republicans who supported the bill are expected to attend.

2. Will Reconciliation Make it Past the CBO Score?

As for reconciliation (Build Back Better Agenda) Congressional leadership had planned to pass the \$1.75 trillion social spending bill last week, but its passage was ultimately delayed amid pushback from moderates in the House who demanded more data from the [Congressional Budget Office](#) before voting on the bill. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) is a nonpartisan office that estimates how much proposed and existing legislation will cost American taxpayers. At the time, Democratic Reps. Ed Case (D-HI), Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ), Stephanie Murphy (D-FL.), Kathleen Rice (D-NY), and Kurt Schrader (D-OR.) said in a statement that they were committed to voting for the plan as long as "fiscal information" from the CBO is "consistent" with top-line information for revenues and investments from the White House.

CBO Director Phillip Swagel said that the office will start releasing estimates of portions of the social spending bill piecemeal, and that a cost estimate of the full bill will come out "as soon as practicable." "The analysis of the bill's many provisions is complicated, and CBO will provide a cost estimate for the entire bill as soon as practicable," Swagel said in a blog post on CBO's website.

Unlike the Senate, the House does not need a CBO score to vote and Speaker Pelosi (D-NY) wants to [debate and vote](#) on the social spending package upon the House's return from recess next week.

Meanwhile, in the Senate, Sen. Joe Manchin (D-WV.) sounded another [alarm](#) on Wednesday after new consumer data found that inflation had hit a 30-year high. Manchin has cited rising inflation as one of his main reasons for not yet supporting the \$1.75 trillion social spending package while he studies its potential impact on the economy and prices. But, when asked if reconciliation is "essentially dead" due to inflation concerns, White House Chief of Staff Ron Klain said quite the opposite: "I think if your concern is the cost of living, it's a concern we have here at the White House, it's a concern Senator

Manchin shares, the Build Back Better bill is the best answer we have to bring those costs down”

With only 21 legislative days remaining before the end of the year, Congress has quite the to-do list: fund the government past Dec. 3, pass a massive defense policy bill, pass the \$1.75 trillion reconciliation bill and maneuver around a U.S. credit default. While it remains to be seen how this will all play out, one thing is certain: the Congress will be in frenzy mode as they often are at the end of the year, leaving staff to wonder if their Christmas plans are in jeopardy.

Wishing you a wonderful weekend,

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