



*Week of 2-14-22
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Congressional Overview

The House was in recess this week, and the Senate approved a House-passed continuing resolution to keep the government funded through March 11. The short-term extension of current spending levels should give congressional appropriators time to finish negotiating an FY 22 omnibus bill. Additionally, the Senate voted on House-passed U.S. Postal Service reform legislation that would transfer healthcare costs for most of its retired employees to Medicare and repeal the mandate that it “prefund” payments for those benefits years in advance.

FCA International Endorses Letter Calling on Congressional Leadership to Release Infrastructure Funds

On Wednesday, February 15, 2022, Reps. Seth Moulton (D-MA) and John Katko (R-NY) called on House and Senate leadership to release billions of dollars for much-needed infrastructure improvements across the country. Funding created by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) remains blocked by delays in the annual FY 22 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development appropriations process.

The letter was signed by 55 members of Congress and endorsed by FCA International, along with 48 organizations representing the transportation sector, safety and environmental advocates, and the business community. Under the current continuing resolution, new funding for highways, public transportation, carbon reduction programs, and other critical infrastructure investments is limited to lower, previously designated funding levels. Additionally, the Department of Transportation is blocked from implementing new programs.

White House Considering Strategy Change for “Build Back Better” Act

There have been rumors that the White House is considering a change in strategy regarding the Build Back Better Act with a focus on deficit reduction to win support from Sen. Joe Manchin (D-WV). The strategy includes keeping revenue-raising tax hikes on the wealthy and corporations as proposed in the House version of the bill and limiting spending to a few programs. Previously, Sen. Manchin (D-WV) supported the \$555 billion in climate-related tax incentives and provisions to cut the cost of prescription drugs. The amended bill could provide almost \$1 trillion in deficit reduction over a ten-year period.

White House and Congress Working to Ease Shipping Industry Challenges

The Biden Administration and Congress are working to ease shipping industry challenges created by a surge in demand for imported goods resulting from the pandemic. The largest container ports, Los Angeles and Long Beach, experienced a record flow of ships with 109 waiting to dock in January. While some ports made progress with clearing cargo backlogs in February, staffing and equipment shortages, among other issues, continue to pose obstacles.

The House-passed “COMPETES” Bill includes the Oceans Shipping Reform Act, which would prohibit ocean carriers from unreasonably turning down opportunities for U.S. exports in line with a new FMC rulemaking, prohibit carriers from reducing shippers’ access to containers and equipment, and require carriers to certify that late fees charged to shippers for holding cargo beyond a contracted period complies with FMC regulations. As reported by Bloomberg News, some carriers chose to send empty containers back to Asia rather than using them for U.S. exports.

COVID-19 Funding

The Biden Administration stated that they plan to request \$30 billion in new spending to combat the COVID-19 pandemic in the omnibus package. The proposal is expected to include \$18 billion for medical countermeasures like antivirals and vaccines, \$5 billion for testing, \$3 billion to treat the uninsured, and \$4 billion to prepare for future variants.

Per the Administration, “While we continue to have sufficient funds to respond to the current omicron surge in the coming weeks, our goal has always been to ensure that we are well-prepared to stay ahead of the virus.” Senate Appropriations Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-VT) said he wasn’t interested in dealing with the request as part of the omnibus spending package and would rather move it as a separate bill. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and Sen. Richard Shelby (R-AL) said that any funds for COVID-19 efforts should come from re-purposing previously appropriated relief funding.