

COVID-19 Update: Federal Developments – Congress

Congress	
News	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The COVID RELIEF NOW coalition — made up of hotels, restaurants and other hard-hit industries — is preparing a strategy of lobbying, ads, grassroots and grassroots advocacy to push for legislation whether President Donald Trump or former Vice President Joe Biden prevails in the election. Hotels and restaurants in particular are trying to persuade lawmakers that they can't wait until January for more aid. If a big relief package remains out of reach, trade groups want lawmakers to authorize at least a second round of Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans and other measures that have bipartisan support. Restaurants are also pushing a bill, RESTAURANTS Act of 2020 (S.4012 & H.R.7197), that would set up a \$120 billion relief fund for the industry that 49 senators now support with Sens. Tammy Baldwin, D-Wis.; Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn.; John Hoeven, R-N.D.; Sheldon Whitehouse, D-R.I.; Joni Ernst, R-Iowa; Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska; Tina Smith, D-Minn.; and Tom Carper, D-Del., all signing on last week.</i> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Senate and House both stand in recess. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin talked by phone again yesterday about a coronavirus relief deal. But there is still no agreement in hand and both chambers are now in recess, with just one week left before the election. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Senate confirmed Judge Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court last evening. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said on October 25 that she is optimistic Congress could pass a pandemic aid package before the election. The speaker went on to say that a relief bill could be passed as soon as the week of October 26 in the House, but that it's up to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., whether it would go to the Senate floor. McConnell has largely steered clear of stimulus talks recently and many GOP senators are opposed to the \$2 trillion deal being discussed by Pelosi and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Senate will move to confirm Judge Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court during the evening of October 26. The Senate is scheduled to go home until after the election after it votes on Barrett's nomination. The House is in recess. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Senate and House are in recess. The Senate will be back in session on October 26. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., told reporters in the Capitol on October 22 that she and Treasury Secretary Mnuchin are "just about there" in their quest to strike a nearly \$2 trillion COVID-19 relief bill. However, there is still no consensus between them on two of the bill's largest components — state and local aid and liability protections for businesses. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Treasury Secretary Mnuchin are continuing talks around a COVID-relief package. Though a deal was not reached by the Speaker's self-imposed October 20 deadline, enough progress was made that both 	

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<p>sides felt like talks should continue. Speaker Pelosi told reporters on October 21 that a compromise could slip past election day. Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., told reporters that he “would consider” the legislation but would not say if the provision would receive a vote in the Senate. Nevertheless, Leader McConnell and Speaker Pelosi empowered the committees of jurisdiction to work with one another in attempt to hammer out the finer details in the event the Speaker and Secretary Mnuchin finally agree to a topline deal. Also worth noting is that Leader McConnell brought to the floor a narrow \$500 billion Republican-led coronavirus relief proposal, which was blocked by Senate Democrats. The measure, which failed to clear the 60-vote threshold needed to move forward, was nearly identical to the Senate GOP bill Democrats rejected in September.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The HEROES Small Business Lifeline Act was introduced on October 20 by Democratic Senators Ben Cardin, D-Md.; Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H; Chris Coons, D-Del.; and Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y. The legislation is a comprehensive package of measures that would provide over \$370 billion of support to the hardest-hit, most vulnerable small businesses, including minority-owned businesses and very small businesses that have been left behind in this pandemic, and industries, such as restaurants and live venues. The bill is nearly identical to the small business provisions of HEROES 2.0, which passed the House of Representatives on October 1. You can read more here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said on October 20 that she and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin are “on a path” to a massive coronavirus relief deal, just hours before her self-imposed deadline to come to a broad agreement with the White House. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Senate came back into session on October 19. The House stands in recess. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., plans to hold during the week of October 19 two votes on a half trillion dollar coronavirus relief package. The Senate will vote on October 20 on additional money for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), and on October 21 on the rest of the package. Democrats have already dismissed the GOP approach as inadequate, and are not expected to support the proposals. The likelihood of Congress approving a broader deal before the election remain slim. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Senate Judiciary Committee is slated to vote on the nomination of Judge Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court on October 22 at 1 p.m. ET, with a full vote on the Senate floor as soon as October 26. Democrats are expected to boycott the Committee vote in order to throw up procedural hurdles, but Judiciary Chairman Lindsay Graham, R-S.C., and Majority Leader McConnell, R-Ky., are confident they can find a work-around to discharge the nomination from Committee and to the floor. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Senate Commerce Committee voted to subpoena the CEOs of Facebook, Twitter and Google for a hearing on Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act which gives internet companies immunity from lawsuits for content posted on their sites. The vote had only GOP support which was enough to report the measure as Republican Senators contend the companies display anti-conservative bias on their platforms. No date has been set yet for the possible hearing. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., is leading a letter to Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., and Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif. —along with 13 other Democrat senators — that calls for access to free coronavirus tests for all staff around the complex, including those who work in the Capitol’s restaurants, on committees and the U.S. Capitol Police. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Senate will be back in session beginning October 19. The House remains in recess. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Senate Judiciary Committee has formally scheduled an Oct. 22 vote to approve Amy Coney Barrett’s nomination to the Supreme Court. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rep. Bill Huizenga, R-Mich., has tested positive for COVID-19. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., announced today that the Senate will take one more shot at a “targeted” coronavirus relief bill before the election. The Senate is expected to reconvene on Monday, Oct. 19, barely two weeks before the election. But McConnell said the Senate would have time to consider both a coronavirus bill and Judge Amy Coney Barrett’s Supreme Court nomination before the election. However, Democrats have repeatedly rejected this approach and will most likely reject it again. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Senate Judiciary Committee held its second day of hearings on Supreme Court Justice nominee Amy Coney Barrett. Tuesday marked Barrett’s first time answering questions from senators as a Supreme Court nominee. She will have a second day of questions Wednesday. Thursday’s session will consist of an outside panel of experts. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., released today a “Dear Colleague” critiquing the Trump Administration’s COVID-19 relief proposal. Read it here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., suggested Oct. 9 during an event that Congress is “unlikely” to reach an agreement on a coronavirus rescue package before the Nov. 3 election. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Rep. Jamie Raskin, D-Md., introduced legislation Oct. 9 that would establish a “Commission of Presidential Capacity,” which would include doctors, psychiatrists and former executive branch officials of both parties tasked with evaluating whether the vice president should take over in the event a president is stricken with severe illness or injury and is not fit to serve. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> House Energy and Commerce Chair Frank Pallone, D-N.J., and House Education and Labor Chair Bobby Scott, D-Va., sent a letter on Oct. 6 to Department of Labor Secretary Eugene Scalia and Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar demanding a national testing strategy to provide increased protections for frontline workers as the COVID-19 pandemic continues. The letter raises concerns that workers lack the protections necessary to access COVID-19 testing. Read it here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rep. Mike Bost, R-Ill., has tested positive for COVID-19. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new resolution from Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., and Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., would require facial coverings to be worn in public areas of the Senate, establish a "robust testing regime" and contact tracing system, and ban lawmakers from going on the floor or to committees before a negative test result. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sens. Ron Johnson, R-Wis., Mike Lee, R-Utah, Thom Tillis, R-N.C., and Rep. Salud Carbajal, D-Calif., have all tested positive for the coronavirus. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The House and Senate stand in recess. The Senate will be back in session on Oct. 19. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increasing number of lawmakers are pushing for mandatory testing in the Capitol, including Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., and House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md. However, Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., and Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., have shown no indication they plan on implementing a broad testing regimen. In fact, Speaker Pelosi pushed back on the idea during an interview on Oct. 4 with CBS. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin spoke again for roughly an hour on Oct. 5, but the two remain far apart on key issues in a potential COVID-19 relief package. However, President Donald Trump tweeted that he is ending negotiations with Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Democratic leaders over a new economic aid package to respond to the pandemic until after the Nov. 3 elections. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The House stands in recess. The Senate will recess for the weekend but will resume business next week. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The House voted 214-207 late on Oct. 2 to approve an “Updated Heroes Act” totaling \$2.2 trillion. All Republicans, Rep. Justin Amash, I-Mich., and 18 Democrats voted no. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin continue to negotiate. There remains disagreement about state and local funding, business tax provisions, business liability protection and the Child Income Tax Credit. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., called the bill a “far-left wish list.” Senate Republicans say their upper limit for a bill is \$1.3-1.5 trillion, although Mnuchin’s counteroffer this week was estimated at \$1.6 trillion. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, has tested positive for COVID. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., told reporters on Oct. 2 that he thinks Congress needs a testing program. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On Wednesday, Sept. 30, the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations held a hearing entitled “Pathway to Vaccine: Ensuring a Safe and Effective Vaccine People Will Trust.” Members and witnesses discussed the impact of the lack of trust in the safety of a future COVID-19 vaccine and the steps required to ensure the efficiency, equity and accessibility of a future vaccine. Democratic Members also expressed concern about the lack of diversity in COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials and equitable distribution of a future vaccine. You can watch a recording of the hearing here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Senate on Sept. 30 approved a stopgap spending bill to avert a government shutdown at midnight — preventing an unlikely but potentially disastrous scenario that would kneecap federal agencies in the weeks before the presidential election. The Senate cleared the continuing resolution — which would extend about \$1.4 trillion in government funding until Dec. 11 — in a bipartisan 84-10 vote. President Donald Trump signed the measure this morning. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> House Democrats delayed their vote on their coronavirus aid package by one day, giving Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., a final few hours to reach a deal with the White House before taking up their own bill and going home. The House is now expected to vote Oct. 1 on Democrats’ \$2.2 trillion coronavirus relief package, whether or not an agreement is reached. Of course, the measure would go nowhere in the GOP-controlled Senate. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The House will take up the Save Our Seas (SOS) 2.0 legislation on Oct. 1. Reps. Suzanne Bonamici, D-Ore., and Don Young, R-Alaska, are the lead House co-sponsors. The Senate passed their version of Save Our Seas back in January. The House version modifies the language slightly to give \$10 million in funding through FY 2024 to carry out the programs and sets aside \$1 million to establish a competition with the Marine Debris Foundation. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The House Committee on Small Business held a hearing Sept. 30 titled: “How COVID-19 is Impacting Small Businesses Across the Food System.” During the hearing, members of the committee focused their questions on how reduced revenues, corporate consolidation and pandemic mandates have forced small restaurants and other food servicers to adjust their business practices. Democratic members of the committee discussed the importance of bolstering food assistance programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) during the pandemic. Additionally, members and witnesses discussed proposed legislation for supporting the food system during this time, including the Ramp Up Act, Heroes Act and COVID Prepare Act. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Senate cleared on September 29 a key procedural hurdle to advancing a short-term funding patch that would prevent a government shutdown at midnight on September 30. The measure was advanced by an 82-6 vote, easily clearing the 60-vote threshold. The Senate is expected to pass on September 30 the continuing resolution with bipartisan support, then sending the measure to President Donald Trump. The stopgap bill stretches about \$1.4 trillion in current government funding levels until December 11. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin met again on September 30 to make one last stab at a coronavirus relief package before lawmakers leave the Hill until after the November election. No news of a compromise has been released. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An ad hoc coalition of more than 150 trade groups — including the National Restaurant Association (NRA), the National Association of Theatre Owners (NATO), the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA) and the National Association of Counties (NACO) — are trying to pressure Congress and the Trump administration to strike a last-minute deal before leaving town. The newly organized COVID RELIEF NOW coalition held on September 30 a press conference asking Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., to push for a compromise as soon as possible. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Senate is planning to vote on the House-passed stopgap spending bill at 5:30 p.m. on September 29 just 48 hours before federal funding expires and the government could shut down. It will likely pass. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> House Democrats released on September 28 a revised version of The Heroes Act. You'll find the bill text here; a one-pager here; a section-by-section summary here; and additional information on the state and local relief provisions here. This updated bill has a price tag of \$2.2 trillion, and includes: strong state and local funding; Unemployment insurance (UI) payments set at \$600; direct payments; funding for schools; and a tax package and small business package. Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin spoke on the morning of September 29 about COVID. Both Pelosi and Mnuchin resolved to speak again September 30 to see if there was any overlap that could lead to a deal in the next few days. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The House Committee on Small Business will hold a hearing titled: "How COVID-19 is Impacting Small Businesses Across the Food System." The hearing is scheduled to begin at 10:00 A.M. on September 30. This hearing will give members a chance to hear about the role of small businesses within our food production, distribution and retail systems, the challenges they are facing and how federal programs are addressing these challenges. Witnesses include Kimberly Gorton, president and CEO of Slade Gorton & Co., Inc. who is testifying on behalf of the National Fisheries Institute; Jimmy Wright, president of Wright's Market who is testifying on behalf of the National Grocers Association (NGA); Rob Larew, president of the National Farmers Union; and Collin Castore, owner of Seventh Son Brewing and president of the Ohio Craft Brewers Association. You can watch the hearing here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senate Judiciary Committee members are planning to begin hearings on October 12 for Judge Amy Coney Barrett, President Donald Trump's Supreme Court nominee. A mid-October hearing kickoff could allow Republicans to confirm her on the Senate floor before the election. The hearings are expected to last four days, similar to other recent confirmations. The opening statements will be October 12, first round of questions will be October 13, followed by a second round of questions and a closed session on October 14. Finally, outside witnesses will present on October 15. Judge Barrett will begin sitting down with senators during the week of October 5, though some Democrats have already vowed not to meet with the nominee. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The House Education & Workforce Committee reported on September 24 a bill (26 to 16) modernizing apprenticeship programs. Both sides of the aisle agreed on the importance of these programs in enhancing the workforce and preparing employees for greater opportunities, but the two sides differed on approaches. Committee Chairman Bobby Scott, D-Va., spoke in favor of the legislation (H.R. 8294) that provides \$3.5 billion in apprenticeship programs and codifies standards for apprenticeship programs registered with the federal Department of Labor, ensuring they meet quality standards and worker protections. Meanwhile, Ranking Member Virginia Foxx, R-N.C., said Congress should encourage employer-lead innovation in apprenticeship programs tailored to the current needs of the workforce. She said job creators should be given the flexibility to innovate and develop high-quality "earn and learn" programs without overreach from Washington. Read more about the legislation here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Senate and House are in recess. They will resume business the week of Sept. 28. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On Thursday, Sept. 24, the Senate held a procedural vote on a stopgap funding bill to avert a government shutdown, teeing up a final vote for passage on Tuesday, Sept. 29, or Wednesday, Sept. 30 – hours before federal funding is set to expire at midnight. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., has directed her committee chairs to assemble a scaled-back coronavirus relief package as a basis for potential talks with the White House. However, hope for a deal between the Democratic-controlled House, the GOP-controlled Senate, and the White House still seems to be a longshot. The revised measure is likely to include scaled-back proposals to give aid to state and local governments; \$1,200 stimulus payments; over \$100 billion for schools; and funding for jobless benefits and production of a COVID-19 vaccine. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On Thursday, Sept. 24, Rep. Antonio Delgado, D-N.Y., and Sens. Chris Coons, D-Del., and Ben Cardin, D-Md., introduced the Small Business Debt Relief Extension Act to extend small business relief through February 2021 and even longer for “highly vulnerable” businesses. Read the press release here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On Wednesday, Sept.23, Sens. Bob Menendez, D-N.J., and Susan Collins, R-Maine, introduced legislation to create an independent, non-partisan commission, closely modeled after the 9/11 Commission, to assess the nation’s preparedness and response to COVID-19 and provide recommendations to improve the country’s readiness for future epidemics and pandemics. Read the press release here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Senate Health, Labor, and Pensions Committee hearing entitled “An Update on the Federal Response” was held on September 23, and included testimony by Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Dr. Anthony Fauci; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Dr. Robert Redfield; Assistant Health and Human Services Secretary for Health Brett Giroir; and U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Commissioner Stephen Hahn. Major issues covered included vaccine reliability and accessibility; the impact of COVID; and COVID guidance. Witnesses expressed confidence that the COVID-19 vaccine will be safe and effective upon its release to the public. Members on both sides of the aisle discussed the impact of the pandemic, such as longterm health concerns, the economy and education. Witnesses shared their data on solutions to move forward despite the hurdles caused by the pandemic. Finally, Senators probed on the concerns regarding guidance issued by the Administration, agencies and other leaders. Witnesses shared how the guidance on COVID-19 is ever-changing due the constant release of new data. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In testimony to the Senate Banking Committee on Thursday, Sept. 24, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell urged Congress to make more funding available for small businesses. Mnuchin said the most important thing Congress could do would be to unlock the unused \$130 billion under the government-backed Paycheck Protection Program to allow the administration to send out second checks to the hardest-hit firms. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The House voted to extend federal funding through mid-December, on the evening of Sept. 22. The bipartisan vote came shortly after top Democrats and Republicans clinched a deal to include funding for nutrition assistance — 	

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<p>specifically, an extension of the Pandemic EBT program that was set to expire — and trade relief payments for farmers. The bill will now go to the Senate, where it's expected to easily pass on Thursday, Sept. 24.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee held a hearing Sept. 23 at 10 a.m. on the federal response to COVID-19. Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases at the National Institutes of Health Anthony Fauci; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Robert Redfield; Assistant Health and Human Services Secretary for Health Brett Giroir; and Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Stephen Hahn testified. Watch a recording here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senator John Thune, R-S.D., a member of Senate GOP leadership told reporters today that the Senate could leave at the end of the week if they pass the stopgap funding bill. They'd come back for the Supreme Court confirmation process. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since the introduction of the House Democrats' stopgap funding measure on Monday, Sept. 21, which would keep the federal government open until Dec. 11, members in both parties are criticizing House leadership's decision to leave out critical ag funding. Despite these objections, the House is planning to vote on the stopgap measure, and it will likely pass along party lines. Senate Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., will then have to decide whether he wants to amend the continuing resolution (CR) with the needed ag funding, which will likely be blocked by Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., or decide to pass the House Dems' bill as is. Changing the CR risks a shutdown, but not including much-needed funding for farmers could have a hefty political cost. Nevertheless, behind-the-scenes talks are still taking place. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Today's Senate GOP lunch focused on the Supreme Court nomination process. According to reports, Senate Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., has the votes needed to fill the Supreme Court vacancy. No nominee has been named. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both the House and Senate are in session the week of Sept 21. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the night of Friday, Sept. 18, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg died after a heroic battle with cancer, after having served 27 years on the Supreme Court. Justice Ginsburg will lie in state Friday, Sept. 25, in the Capitol. On Wednesday, Sept. 23, and Thursday, Sept. 24, she will lie in repose at the Supreme Court. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A court vacancy sets up a pitched battle just weeks before an election that promises to bring uncertainty to the election process itself, as millions of voters choose to vote by mail while state courts issue various rulings on guidelines for doing so. The 2000 Bush/Gore election was ultimately decided as the result of a Supreme Court decision. With Justice Ginsburg's death, an eight-person Supreme Court, largely split along ideological lines, could set up a tie on election lawsuits related to voting irregularities, adding further chaos to an already tumultuous year. Many are urging the nomination to fill Justice Ginsburg's seat be delayed until after the election, but with control of Congress and the White House hanging in the balance, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said a confirmation vote will be held as soon as the President sends up a nominee. President Trump announced Saturday that he will nominate a woman to fill the slot next week. Senators Susan 	

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<p>Collins, R-Maine, and Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, both of whom are up for reelection, urged the President to wait until after the election. A nomination announcement is likely to come this week.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On Monday, Sept. 21, House Democrats released a stop-gap funding bill that would avert a government shutdown on Sept. 30 and keep federal agencies funded through Dec. 11. Both sides appear to agree on an end date for the continuing resolution, which would extend current government funding levels and buy more time for negotiations on a slate of fiscal 2021 spending bills. But far more contentious has been the debate over which policy and funding exceptions should be included, also known as anomalies. Before unveiling the text, Democrats removed tens of billions of dollars in trade aid for farmers requested by the White House, in addition to billions of dollars in pandemic-related food assistance for families that they supported. Republicans never signed off on the removal of farmer bailout aid. House leaders have been hoping to vote this week on the measure. Read a summary of the bill here and view the full bill text here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On Wednesday, Sept. 23 at 10 a.m., the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee will hold a hearing on the federal response to COVID-19. Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases at the National Institutes of Health Anthony Fauci; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Robert Redfield; Assistant Health and Human Services Secretary for Health Brett Giroir; and Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Stephen Hahn will testify. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> U.S. Representative Jahana Hayes, D-Conn., tested positive for coronavirus on Sunday, Sept. 20. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Congress left town for the weekend without a coronavirus relief deal. Both the House and Senate will be back the week of Sept. 21. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new program created by Congress earlier this year, Pandemic-EBT (P-EBT), is set to expire on Sept. 30. P-EBT was created to help make up for free and subsidized meals that children were missing while schools were either shut down or run virtually due to coronavirus. The program gives households about \$5.70 per day for every school day missed. The money is distributed exactly like food stamps — on debit-like EBT cards. The aid can only be used to buy food. Millions of households have so far received one-time payments of about \$250 to \$450 per child, depending on where they live. However, with less than two weeks from the program expiring, just nine states have been approved to dole out more benefits. The scramble comes as congressional leaders and the White House have failed to get anywhere close to a deal on another round of stimulus aid. Advocates are now urging lawmakers to include an extension of P-EBT in any short-term spending deal. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the Sept. 16 Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies hearing on coronavirus response efforts, Senators and witnesses discussed current COVID-19 testing capacity and technology; strategies to support populations particularly vulnerable to COVID-19, such as rural communities and elderly individual; potential replacement plans for the Affordable Care Act; the importance of wearing a mask; and various production decisions. Additionally, witnesses answered questions regarding the timeline, distribution and prioritization of COVID-19 vaccines and testified that additional appropriations are needed to support 	

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<p>state distribution of a COVID-19 vaccine. Finally, Senators asked about the level of political interference in Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Health and Human Services (HHS) decisions, which witnesses responded that there was no political interference. CDC Director Robert Redfield responded, “We are going to continue to give Congress and the nation the best public health advice. We are not going to let political influence modulate that.”</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., confirmed on a conference call with a reporter Sept. 15 that House Democratic leadership is aiming to put a continuing resolution (CR) on the House floor next week, giving Congress ample time before the Sept. 30 funding deadline. Senate Appropriations Chairman Richard Shelby, R-Ala., said they’re considering a CR that lasts through Dec. 18, though some Democrats are pushing for February. Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., has expressed interest in attaching a one-year highway extension to the CR. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The House Problem Solvers Caucus, led by Reps. Josh Gottheimer, D-N.J., and Tom Reed, R-N.Y., unveiled their COVID-19 relief plan on Sept. 15, as a final shot at a bipartisan deal before Election Day. The roughly \$2 trillion plan includes a second round of stimulus checks, unemployment aid and small business loans to last through at least next spring. Note, it’s very unlikely that this package will be put on the floor, although no decisions have been made yet, and individual pieces could be considered in some form. Read the press release and blueprint here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., on a private call with her caucus Sept. 15, insisted that the House will stay in session until she and other congressional leaders can reach agreement on a COVID-19 relief package, possibly cutting short the month-long recess in the run up to the presidential election. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> House Republican leaders rolled out the party’s election-year plan on Sept. 15, dubbed ‘Commitment to America.’ Read it here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On Wednesday, Sept. 16 at 10 a.m., The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies will hold a hearing on coronavirus response efforts. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Robert Redfield, the Department of Health and Human Services’ Assistant Secretary for Health Brett Giroir and Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response Bob Kadlec will testify. You can watch the hearing here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As Congress looks to a short-term funding measure to keep the federal government open past Sept. 30, there is a possibility that lawmakers could add emergency funds to address severe weather damage across the country, from hurricanes in the Southeast to the catastrophic wildfires on the West Coast — and potentially the derecho that ripped across Iowa and other states in August, if needed. However, Senate Appropriations Chair Richard Shelby, R-Ala., isn’t keen on packaging billions of dollars for states ravaged by hurricanes and wildfires with a continuing resolution to keep the government open. Adding this funding would no longer make the continuing resolution “clean,” therefore possibly threatening the outcome of the stopgap measure. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A number of House Democrats are communicating to their leadership that they are frustrated. They don’t like that COVID-19 relief talks have broken down, as the two sides aren’t talking at all. This is bad for campaigning efforts— 	

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<p>they need something to take back to voters and blaming Senate Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., isn't enough. There are three options for frustrated House Democrats: 1) They can do nothing, which doesn't really appear to be much of an option at the moment. 2) They can vote on an altered version of the Heroes Act. This will be difficult for the Dems to pass. The price tag is high, and everyone will push for their policies to be included in the bill. 3) This option seems to make the most sense: The leadership could put up some votes on individual policies including enhanced unemployment, a bulked-up testing program and an extension of the Paycheck Protection Program. The question is, does this make a difference to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi? Currently, most of Washington is betting that a relief bill won't happen before the election.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Restaurant Association (NRA) sent Congress a blueprint of proposals for saving the industry in July, including a \$120 billion fund to bail out restaurants. This is a pared down proposal, as the association acknowledges that "a larger solution for the industry seems unlikely to be passed this year." The trade group is asking for a second round of Paycheck Protections Program (PPP) loans with more flexibility, as well as an expansion of the Employee Retention Tax Credit "to help restaurants get support after a PPP loan has run out" and other tax credits to allay what restaurants are spending on coronavirus-related equipment, supplies and training. Read the NRA's blueprint here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Senate is in recess for the weekend of Sept. 12., while both the House and Senate will be in session the week of Sept. 14. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the House Financial Services Committee hearing on "The Need for Financial Aid to America's States and Territories During the Pandemic: Supporting First Responders, Assisting Schools in Their Efforts to Safely Educate, and Preventing Mass Layoffs," members of the committee, particularly in opening remarks, discussed budgetary gaps that state and local governments face because of the pandemic and the effect of budget cuts on government services. Members and witnesses discussed the use of state and local relief funds allocated from S. 3548, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, and whether H.R. 6800, the Heroes Act, provide the necessary relief funding. Witnesses noted that flexibility in spending and more federal funds would help states, and most especially, first responders. Members asked if states have taken advantage of federal lending facilities such as the Municipal Lending Facility. Answers were mixed among witnesses, depending on the needs of the state. Republican members of the committee focused on reopening the economy instead of state and local government relief funding and called for liability protections for businesses. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rep. Kevin Brady, R-Texas, the top Republican on the House Ways and Means Committee, plans to roll out legislation on Sept. 11 that would create a payroll tax holiday during the pandemic. The legislation would excuse workers from all of the payroll taxes they're supposed to pay between September and the end of December. It would also cover self-employed workers, who were left out of Trump's payroll tax order. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Senate failed to move forward on a scaled-down, \$500 billion Republican coronavirus relief measure. Fifty-two out of the 53-member GOP caucus voted in favor of the proposal, but 60 votes were needed for the bill to advance, and no Senate Democrats voted for the bill. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The House Financial Services Committee held a hearing Sept. 10 on "The Need for Financial Aid to America's States and Territories During the Pandemic: Supporting First Responders, Assisting Schools in Their Efforts to Safely Educate, and Preventing Mass Layoffs." Witnesses included Gov. Laura Kelly, D-Kan.; Gov. Tim Walz, D-Minn.; Lourdes "Lou" Leon Guerrero, Gov. of the Territory of Guam; and Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, D-N.M. View a recording of the hearing here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the Senate HELP Committee hearing on COVID-19 vaccines on Sept. 9, witnesses Francis Collins, Director of the National Institutes of Health, and Jerome Adams, Surgeon General, testified that there are six vaccine candidates currently engaged in large-scale U.S. trials. Senators and witnesses discussed strategies to ensure public confidence in the COVID-19 vaccine and how to combat vaccine hesitancy. Senators and witnesses also explored the issue of health equity through the lens of the COVID-19 vaccine. They discussed an equitable and free-of-charge distribution of the vaccine and examined the importance of diversity in clinical trials. Additionally, witnesses provided answers regarding the science of the COVID-19 vaccine, clarifying topics such as herd immunity and the function of two-dose vaccines. Senators and witnesses agreed on the importance of not compromising on safety. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than 80 trade associations, unions and organizations wrote Congressional Leaders on Sept. 9, asking them to enact a one-year surface transportation extension. The current surface transportation authorization expires Sept. 30, just three weeks away. In addition to a straight extension, the signatories asked for \$37 billion in emergency funding for state Department of Transportations and \$32 billion for public transit agencies to recover from the COVID-19 crisis. They also asked lawmakers to “ensure solvency of the Highway Trust Fund for the duration of the extension at a minimum.” Read the letter here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Senate is set to vote Sept. 9 on the GOP’s narrow relief proposal. The bill would provide \$300 in boosted federal weekly unemployment benefits through the end of December, another round of money for the small business Paycheck Protection Program and liability protections for schools, businesses and health care providers. It also includes \$15 billion in grants for childcare and a two-year tax credit for donations to scholarships and grants. Note - Senate Republicans acknowledge the bill will not go anywhere and is intended as a marker. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Institutes of Health Director Francis Collins and Surgeon General Jerome Adams testified Sept. 9 in front of the Senate HELP committee on “Vaccines: Saving Lives, Ensuring Confidence, and Protecting Public Health.” You can watch it here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The House Financial Services Committee is holding a hearing Sept. 10 at noon, It’s titled, “The Need for Financial Aid to America’s States and Territories During the Pandemic: Supporting First Responders, Assisting Schools in Their Efforts to Safely Educate, and Preventing Mass Layoffs.” You can view the hearing here. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Senate returns from its August recess Sept. 8 with no signs of progress on a new coronavirus relief package. Despite weeks of high-level talks between the White House and Democratic congressional leaders, a bipartisan compromise is increasingly unlikely before the election. Senate GOP leadership plans to bring a targeted relief package to the floor this week, but the move will be largely symbolic. The House returns next week. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin have tentatively agreed to use a short-term spending bill to avoid a government shutdown at the end of September. There is no consensus for how long the stopgap would extend government funding past Sept. 30, however, a mid-December deadline would be the traditional practice during an election year. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Senate reconvenes on Tuesday, September 8, in the afternoon, and the House is in session next week for committee work days and returning to Washington for votes the week of September 14 and beyond. Senate Republicans are expected to release a “targeted relief plan” addressing coronavirus relief needs after Labor Day with a vote on Wednesday, September 9. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On Wednesday, September 23, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee will hold a hearing, “COVID-19: An Update on the Federal Response,” at 10:00 AM. Witnesses include Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director, NIAID; Dr. Robert Redfield, Director, CDC; Adm. Brett Giroir, MD, Assistant Secretary for Health, HHS; and Dr. Stephen Hahn, Commissioner, FDA. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis held a “Hybrid Hearing with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin” on September 1 to discuss the implementation of relief measures to support the economic recovery. Members questioned the Secretary on the state of the economy, oversight of the Paycheck Protection Program, inequality and negotiations on the next relief bill. Mnuchin expressed the Administration’s support for a bipartisan deal on legislation to extend enhanced unemployment benefits, provide funds for schools and continue to support areas of the economy still facing challenges. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., is sending his colleagues a letter on Sept. 3, calling for “another comprehensive, bipartisan” COVID-19 relief bill. This is in direct response to the news that Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., plans to call to the floor the GOP’s stripped-down COVID-19 relief bill next week. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Senate and House stand in recess. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As we cross into September, Congress faces a looming deadline at the end of the month as government funding runs dry on Sept. 30. On top of this must-pass legislation, Congress has yet to come to a compromise on COVID-19 relief. These two items will be paired during September, and it seems almost inevitable that they get wrapped into one package which should pass by month’s end. There are only 11 legislative days left in September. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When Senators return the week of Sept. 7, it is expected that they will vote on the GOP’s “skinny” (i.e. stripped-down) COVID relief bill. Everything, including timing, is subject to change as this is a moving target. As of Sept. 2, the 	

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<p>measure does NOT include direct payment checks, but does include many of the other agreed-upon items like money for schools and unemployment benefits. Senate Republicans are close to garnering 51 votes for this bill. Important to note: This bill is not meant to become law, but rather to serve as a marker for where Senate Republicans stand when negotiations begin in earnest.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin is slated to testify during the afternoon of September 1 before the special House committee investigating the federal response to the coronavirus crisis. This hearing occurs as a stalemate continues over a new emergency relief package for struggling workers, cities and states. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A bipartisan group of 30 members of Congress urged the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Robert Redfield to provide safety guidance on community activities around Halloween during the coronavirus pandemic. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The House convened on August 22 to vote on H.R. 8015 (116). It approved the \$25 billion emergency funding bill for the U.S. Postal Service, which Democrats say is urgently needed to halt any attempt by President Donald Trump to impede mail-in voting this fall. The legislation also would halt operational changes deployed by Trump’s postmaster general. More than two dozen Republicans joined all Democrats in backing the bill. This legislation is not likely to be brought to the floor in the Senate. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The House Oversight Committee held a hearing on August 24 to question Postmaster General Louis DeJoy about whether the U.S. Postal Service is equipped to handle a surge of mail-in voting ahead of the November election. This hearing followed Postmaster General DeJoy’s appearance in front of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee on August 21. DeJoy told both committees that the Postal Service is up to the task of handling election mail delivery. "As we head into the election season, I want to assure this committee and the American public that the Postal Service is fully capable and committed to delivering the nation's election mail securely and on time," DeJoy told lawmakers during the hearing on August 21. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Blue Dog House Caucus sent on August 21 a letter to Congressional leaders urging bipartisan support of several policies in the next COVID relief package including: extension of unemployment benefits; financial support for state, local and tribal governments, K-12 schools and colleges/universities; a second round of economic impact payments; and more oversight of COVID spending. Read the letter here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rep. Dan Meuser, R-Pa., has tested positive for COVID-19. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-La., said today that he has tested positive for the coronavirus, becoming the second senator known to do so. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., told the Louisville Courier-Journal in an August 18 article that he doubts the Senate will pass a stand-alone Postal Service bill, even as House Democrats prepare to pass their own legislation. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senate Republicans are planning to introduce a stripped-down coronavirus relief bill — or “skinny” bill — amid an impasse in negotiations between the White House and top Democratic leaders. The latest GOP coronavirus relief bill is expected to include an additional \$10 billion for the U.S. Postal Service, \$300 in boosted weekly federal unemployment benefits until December 27, another round of money for the Paycheck Protection Program and liability protections. The proposal is also expected to include money for education and testing. The bill is very similar to the \$1 trillion HEALS Act, which Senate Republicans introduced in late July. Senate leadership told GOP aides on a call Monday afternoon that text would be released in the next 24 hours. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., have adamantly opposed any "skinny," or piecemeal, proposal. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Postmaster General Louis DeJoy has agreed to testify at two congressional hearings — before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee on August 21 and the House Oversight and Reform Committee on August 24. Additionally, Postmaster General DeJoy announced today, that he was suspending "longstanding operational initiatives" at the United States Postal Service, amid fears that the changes could delay election mail this fall in the middle of the pandemic. "To avoid even the appearance of any impact on election mail, I am suspending these initiatives until after the election is concluded," DeJoy said in a statement. Read the statement in full here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senate Agriculture Chair Pat Roberts, R-Kan., is pressing the Department of Agriculture (USDA) to continue school nutrition waivers during the COVID-19 pandemic. In a letter signed by 19 other Senate Republicans and much of the GOP side of the Ag panel, including Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky. — the request is not specific in calling for USDA to extend waivers that broadly allow relaxed eligibility rules or summer feeding models to continue as needed this school year. But the lawmakers “encourage continued use of the child nutrition program waiver authority ably used thus far.” Read the letter here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On August 14, Senate Agriculture ranking member Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., and House Education and Labor Chair Bobby Scott, D-Va., released a letter calling on the Department of Agriculture to extend all waivers, including those that allow schools and other entities to provide free meals to all children regardless of their family’s income level. Read the letter here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., is bringing the Chamber back into session on August 22 for a rare weekend vote. Speaker Pelosi said in a letter sent on the evening of Aug. 16 that the House will try to pass a USPS reform bill – right now, the leadership seems focused on a bill penned by Rep. Carolyn Maloney, D-N.Y., chair of the Oversight Committee. The legislation prohibits U.S. Postal Service (USPS) from making changes to service, and reverts operations to where they were on Jan. 1. You can read the bill here. There also is discussion that the USPS Bill will include \$25 billion in new funding for the USPS. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Senate is in recess as of August 14 until Labor Day. The House also is out for the rest of August and the first two weeks of September. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., is the latest member of Congress to co-sponsor legislation introduced in June by Sens. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz., Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., and Chris Coons, D-Del., that would set up a \$120 billion fund to rescue the restaurant industry. This legislation is supported by the National Restaurant Association and the Independent Restaurant Coalition. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> White House officials and top Democrats concede that a coronavirus relief deal is far from reach following six days without in-person meetings — leaving little hope that a compromise will be found by month’s end. As of Aug. 13, Washington’s top negotiators have no set plans to meet in the coming days, putting an indefinite halt to talks. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As of right now, a deal on another coronavirus relief package is highly unlikely to happen this week — or maybe even this month. Currently there has been no recent talks between the Democratic leadership and the White House. Congress is essentially on recess and although the Senate is still technically in session, the vast majority of senators are out of town. They will be given 24-hour notice to return if a COVID-19 deal is reached or if a vote is scheduled. In the House, there will be no votes until the week of Sept. 14, unless there is an agreement before then. In fact, the House will only be in session for six weeks for the rest of the year. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With White House and Democratic leadership talks on a coronavirus package stalled, the Senate will remain in session as of August 10 with no scheduled votes. The House is in recess. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> President Donald Trump signed on August 8 executive orders on unemployment insurance, evictions for rental properties, student loan forgiveness and a payroll tax holiday for employees. However, doubts remain over the legality of such an action without Congressional approval. The Executive Orders address the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The federal pandemic unemployment benefit will be reduced from the \$600/week enacted by Congress (on top of regular unemployment) to \$400 a week. President Trump is directing HHS and CDC to consider measures to prohibit evictions for failure to pay rent as a result of COVID-19 hardships in an effort to stop the spread of the virus. HUD is directed to prioritize federal funds that can be used for financial assistance for renters and homeowners. For student loans, borrowers can pay 0% interest or choose to suspend payments through the end of 2020. The President directed the Treasury Department to allow employers to defer payment of the employee portion of certain payroll taxes through the end of 2020. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The House and Senate are both in recess and are waiting for Congressional leaders to recall them should they reach a deal on a COVID-19 relief package. No deal appears to be in sight. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Momentum appears to be growing for rapid testing in the Capitol, even though Senate Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., remain opposed to the idea. Sen. Roy Blunt, R-Mo., chairman of the Senate Rules Committee, told reporters on August 6 that he’s putting together a plan to implement rapid testing on the Senate side and is in talks with the Capitol physician, though he said it might be more complicated in the House. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With no deal on a coronavirus relief package in sight, most senators are expected to head home on August 6, leaving negotiations up to the White House and party leaders. The Senate is expected to technically stay in session during the week of August 10 but will not hold any votes unless there is a breakthrough in coronavirus negotiations. That means senators — like their House counterparts — will be back home, waiting for word from the leadership whether a deal has been reached. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., wants COVID testing in the Capitol. His statement: “Our nation is facing unacceptable testing delays, which we must address in order to get a handle on this crisis. House Democrats passed the Heroes Act over two months ago to address this challenge, but I also have concerns about the availability of testing for Members, their staffs, and employees. Everyone in the Hill community should be wearing masks, practicing social distancing, and using telework options when possible. In addition, with Members traveling to and from DC from all parts of the country, we should seriously consider providing testing for Members and all employees who work in the Capitol complex, many of whom are my constituents. I will be discussing this with my colleagues in the coming days.” Neither House Speaker Pelosi, D-Calif., nor Senate Majority Leader McConnell, R-Ky., have expressed support for testing in the Capitol. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rep. Rodney Davis, R-Ill., has tested positive for COVID. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sens. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, Susan Collins, R-Maine, and Martha McSally, R-Ariz., released a new enhanced unemployment proposal Aug. 5 that would extend plussed-up UI benefits through the end of the year. In August, states could choose \$500 per week, or \$400 per week if the states don’t want to change the amount in September. In September: \$400 per week. October through December: 80% of wages, or a waiver for \$300 per week if the state is unable to pay 80% of prior earnings. Read the release here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As COVID-19 aid talks continue ever so slowly, Senate Agriculture ranking member Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., is drawing a line in the sand—if farmers are to receive billions more in aid in the next coronavirus package, Congress must also provide relief for millions of Americans struggling to pay for groceries via SNAP. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows continue to meet with Democratic leadership on the fifth coronavirus relief bill. Meadows and Mnuchin were on Capitol Hill today for the Senate GOP lunch, and then they met with Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., at 3:30 p.m. Following the meeting with Democratic leadership, Mnuchin and Meadows are expected to meet with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., spearheaded the legislation creating the \$670 billion Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). As chairman of the Senate Small Business Committee, he now faces the challenge of steering more resources to millions of already ravaged companies so they can survive the next few months. He and Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, proposed a small-business relief package on July 27, which is now being negotiated with Senate Democrats. The proposal includes 	

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<p>\$190 billion for a revamped PPP and creating a \$100 billion program to provide long-term, low-cost loans to seasonal businesses who may have had their entire season wiped out as well as small businesses located in opportunity zones or other low-income census tracts. Rubio said they are willing to listen to comments that the threshold of 50% reduction in revenue is too restrictive. He said that both the Republicans and Democrats are closer on PPP than any other aspect of the stimulus package. Rubio also argued the Small Business Administration is “due for reform and modernization,” adding the U.S. “needs to rebuild its industrial capacity.”</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Senate is in session on August 3. The House is in recess, subject to the call of the Chair. Negotiations on a coronavirus relief bill continue. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Restaurant Association sent a letter to Congressional leaders imploring them to make it easier for restaurants to get second Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans and to make expenses paid with the loan tax deductible. Read more here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Independent Restaurant Coalition is going up on the air with a TV ad in favor of the RESTAURANTS Act. (S.4012/H.R.7197). The bill, introduced by Sens. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., and Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz., and Reps. Earl Blumenauer, D-Ore., and Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa., would set up a \$120 billion grant program to help the industry. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a 217-197 vote, the House approved on July 31 a \$1.3 trillion spending package that includes \$210 billion in emergency money to help federal agencies fight the coronavirus pandemic, in addition to funding other priorities. The legislation would fund most of the federal government next fiscal year and includes billions of dollars in off-the-book spending for state and local public health departments, public health prevention efforts, medical research, infrastructure, public housing and more. The legislation has no chance in the Republican-controlled Senate, and President Trump has already threatened to veto it. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rep. Raúl Grijalva, D-Ariz., chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, has tested positive for COVID-19. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Senate was not in session today and will return on August 3. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., said the House will remain in session until a relief package is negotiated and passed, even if that means cancelling the August recess. The House had been scheduled to adjourn for the August recess on August 7. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As plussed-up unemployment benefits expire on July 31, little movement has been made on an agreement for an extension, let alone agreement around a larger aid bill. On July 30, Mark Meadows, the White House chief of staff, made an offer to extend enhanced unemployment at \$600 per week for four months as a stand-alone bill. This is a new offer from the White House, and further than Republicans have gone thus far. Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., rejected the offer, and countered with extending enhanced unemployment insurance at the same rate – \$600 per week – through the first quarter of 2021. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On July 30, House Education and Labor Chair Bobby Scott, D-Va., released legislation that would explicitly make all students temporarily eligible for free school breakfasts and lunches throughout the upcoming school year. It's the first time, at least in recent memory, that a committee chair with jurisdiction is backing the concept of universal school meals, even if temporary. Read more here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., announced on July 29 that lawmakers must wear masks in the House portion of the Capitol complex – office buildings included. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senate Republicans are still mulling a standalone extension of federal unemployment insurance, which is scheduled to expire tomorrow. The proposal gaining the most steam comes from Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Wisc., a renewed enhanced unemployment at 66 % of lost wages, or \$200 per week. The strategy has general backing from the White House, which is eager to extend the bulked up unemployment insurance. In addition to the Johnson proposal, Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, has an alternative bill that would give states two options for three months: either 80% wage replacement or a flat payment of \$500 a week, that would gradually decrease to \$400 in September and \$300 in October. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The House passed on July 29 a pair of child care bills aimed at helping families during the pandemic. The first, the Child Care Is Essential Act, would provide grant money to childcare providers in an effort to help the facilities reopen safely amid the coronavirus pandemic and stabilize the sector's operations. The second, called the Child Care for Economic Recovery Act, includes a number of tax provisions that are aimed at making child care more affordable for families and providing assistance to child-care providers. Both bills passed in largely party-line votes. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ABA joined a coalition of trade associations in a letter sent on July 29 to Congressional leaders expressing support of the liability protection component of HEALS Act. See the letter here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ABA joined another letter in support of the FRNT LINE Act (S. 4213), recently introduced by Sen. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa., to provide tax relief for essential workers, including employees of the food, beverage and agriculture industries. Read the letter here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Senate Republican Policy Committee released on July 28 a summary of the eight bills that make up the Health, Economic Assistance, Liability Protection, and Schools (HEALS) Act. The summary includes descriptions of each bill released by the Republican Conference as well as previous actions taken by Congress and the Administration in response to the pandemic. Congress faces pressure to take action as federal pandemic unemployment insurance expires on July 31 and August recess approaches. Read the summary here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rep. Louie Gohmert, R-Texas, has tested positive for COVID-19. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ABA is joining with a coalition of trade associations on a letter to be sent this week to Congressional leadership in support of the liability portion of the HEALS Act, the Republicans' COVID relief proposal released yesterday. The pillars of the proposal include another round of \$1,200 in direct payments; more money for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP); a reduction in boosted federal unemployment benefits, from \$600 to \$200 per week for a 60-day period; 	

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<p>liability protection; and more than \$100 billion for reopening schools and colleges. State and Local Aid might be a bigger problem than currently envisioned. Some Republicans want to give states flexibility with money already appropriated, and Democrats want new dollars.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democrats on the House Agriculture Committee filed on July 27 legislation to extend regulatory flexibilities for SNAP recipients through June 2021 without requiring USDA approval. The bill would allow states to extend SNAP certification periods and simplify certain reporting requirements, among other provisions. You can read the press release here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The House and Senate are in session the week of July 27. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senate Republicans plan to unveil their COVID relief bill around 4:30 p.m. on July 27. The ABA team will provide highlights once available. Note – this will not be the final product; Senate Republicans and Democrats must find a compromise and we will likely see a week or more of debate. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On July 26, Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., indicated the House could stay in session until the final coronavirus economic relief legislation is hammered out. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., is expected to share the Republican proposal for the phase 4 coronavirus relief bill, “CARES 2,” on July 27. That proposal is expected to be the starting point of negotiations with congressional Democrats. There is speculation final passage of a bill could be later than originally hoped given how far apart each side appears. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senate Republicans are set to soon unveil plans to extend financial support to struggling small businesses facing new pressure as the coronavirus outbreak surges across the country. As part of an economic relief deal negotiated by GOP lawmakers and the White House, the plan is expected to allow certain employers that received Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans to apply for a second round of aid if they can demonstrate a 50% revenue loss. Senate Small Business Chair Marco Rubio, R-Fla., who has been crafting the plan, said his plan would be targeted at employers with 300 workers or less and those in low-income neighborhoods. He said it would also allow business expenses on personal protective equipment and other COVID-19 prevention measures to count toward the forgivable portion of the PPP loans. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On July 22, Sens. Shelley Moore Capito, R-W.Va., Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., and Mike Rounds, R-S.D., introduced the U.S. MADE Act of 2020 to decrease U.S. dependence on countries like China for critical personal protective equipment (PPE) for health care providers. The senators noted, given the uncertainty over future market conditions, U.S. companies have been reluctant to make long-term investments in domestic PPE production. The inability of the U.S. to be self-sufficient with its supply of PPE is a national security issue. The bill declares national priorities items such as testing swabs, surgical and respirator masks, face shields, surgical and isolation gowns and bandages among other items. The bill text is here. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After meeting with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., and White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said staff were now trying to finalize text of an agreement, which is expected to be released as a group of bills instead of one piece of legislation. It is likely to be released on July 27. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lawmakers and industry groups are pushing for the next coronavirus relief bill to include a suspension of the 12% federal excise tax on heavy-duty vehicles through December 31, 2021. Rep. Chris Pappas, D-N.H., led a bipartisan group of 55 lawmakers in sending a letter to House leadership on the proposal that would help “ensure this essential industry can more quickly recover, and to save jobs in the trucking industry.” Almost 200 industry groups also sent a letter on July 20 to House and Senate leaders supporting the proposal, following a similar letter sent during the week of July 13 from the United Auto Workers (UAW) union. The American Trucking Association also highlighted the environmental and safety advantages of suspending the tax, such as the saved funds could be directed to replacing older trucks, modernizing the truck fleet and speeding the purchase of new trucks with the latest technology. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Coronavirus Relief Fund Flexibility for State and Local Government Act authored by Sen. John Kennedy, R-La., has been included in the Senate’s coronavirus relief package. The bill would give state and local governments more flexibility as they use funds provided by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, including using CARES Act funding for operating expenses unrelated to the coronavirus, but does not allow officials to spend this CARES Act money on shoring up their pension funds. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senate Republicans expect to put out their legislation the week of July 20, and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., warned that it will have most of his conference on board, but perhaps not all of it. Votes on the legislation are not expected to take place this week. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reps. Darin LaHood, R-Ill., and Jimmy Panetta, D-Calif., introduced a bill on July 21 that would provide a tax credit to food and beverage distributors to cover debt for products that were shipped off prior to the coronavirus pandemic. The legislation deals with debt from products that have not yet been paid for but were sent to establishments prior to shutdowns of restaurants, bars and other businesses. The Providing Liquidity for Uncollectible Sales (PLUS) Act tax credit would be a 100% tax credit that these distributors could take for uncollectible debt from food and beverage establishments that were ordered to close for at least 30 days between March 25 and July 15. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiations are underway between Senate Republicans, Democrats and the White House on the next tranche of relief funding. Topics for discussion include liability protections, aid to states, a payroll tax cut, another round of direct payments to Americans, vaccine development and how to safely reopen schools. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twenty-one Republican Governors sent on July 21 a letter to Congressional leaders urging them to embrace liability reform. Read the letter here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Senate reconvened and the House returned to Washington for votes on July 20. This week both chambers will consider the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) on the floor, and the House will take up the first package of 	

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<p>appropriations bills. Behind the scenes, negotiations will begin on the next coronavirus relief bill, with the goal of passing legislation before the House’s scheduled adjournment for August recess on July 31.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows will brief Senate Republicans on July 21 during their closed-door caucus lunch on the forthcoming coronavirus relief bill. This will be the first time the caucus as a whole will meet since returning to Washington. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both the House and Senate will be back in session on July 20. We expect negotiations on a final relief bill to begin immediately, although it’s likely legislation won’t be brought to the floor until the week of July 27. August 7 is the key date, with each chamber scheduled to gavel out for August Recess. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., has said she would be willing to push the recess date back if more time is needed. Senate Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., has not said the same. As we’ve written previously, Senate Republicans have two red lines: liability protection and spending on more than \$1 trillion on the bill, although it appears there may be more room there for negotiation than Leader McConnell will admit. Democrats want funding for state and localities to help fill budget deficits brought on by COVID and an extension of unemployment benefits. Republicans also have to reach consensus with President Trump, who has expressed shifting ideas for what he may be willing to support. He has been pushing payroll tax breaks and tax incentives for businesses, as well as additional stimulus checks for families and individuals, all of which have mixed support among Republican Senators. The stakes are high, with the election just over 100 days from now. Both parties believe a deal will be reached, but it remains to be seen what it will look like and when it will come together. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We received an advance copy of the liability reform language being circulated by Senate Republicans. Highlights include: protections for schools, colleges, charities, local governments and businesses that follow public health guidelines, and for frontline health workers. Entities and frontline health workers are liable only for “gross negligence” or “intentional misconduct;” and protections from labor and employment laws for employers who follow public health guidelines. It would protect employers from liability for workplace testing. Importantly, these cases would be heard in federal court. See the draft here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On July 16, Rep. Tom Rice, R-S.C., led House Republicans in introducing the Healthy Workplace Tax Credit to provide a refundable tax credit against payroll taxes for 50% of the costs incurred by a business for COVID-19 testing, personal protective equipment (PPE), disinfecting, extra cleaning and reconfiguring workspaces to adhere to social distancing guidelines. There is a \$1,000 limit per employee for the business’s first 500 employees, \$750 per employee for the next 500 employees and \$500 for each employee after that. Rice introduced the bill as an addition to legislation from Rep. Darin LaHood, R-Ill., that would create a temporary tax credit to offset costs of cleaning. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On July 16, Sen. Rick Scott, R-Fla., called on the Treasury Department to provide an accounting of where the more than \$1 trillion in aid to state and local governments went before Congress approves more. Scott said the Treasury launched a web portal on April 13 to fund coronavirus-related expenses by state, local and tribal governments, but the department had not yet released a report on how much of the money has been spent and what it paid for. He said "over \$1 trillion in 	

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<p>funding" had already been approved for the governments by Congress, including \$150 billion in the Coronavirus Relief Fund to directly reimburse local governments for pandemic response costs. Scott also suggested getting the information state-by-state could be difficult, as fewer than 10 states had responded to a letter he, Sens. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, and Ron Johnson, R-Wisc., sent on June 15 requesting how coronavirus-related federal funds had been allocated.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On July 16, Senate Democrats released a new \$350 billion proposal to invest in communities of color suffering amid the pandemic, their latest marker as Congress gets ready to negotiate the next and potentially final coronavirus package. The proposal, led by Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., comes as minorities have been disproportionately hit by the coronavirus. It would provide \$135 billion for childcare, community health care and job training, along with \$215 billion for infrastructure, expanding Medicaid and providing a tax credit for homeowners and renters. The Democratic proposal would in part be funded by using \$200 billion of unspent money from March’s \$2 trillion CARES Act, H.R. 748 (116). 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On July 14, a group of ten House Republicans sent a letter to congressional GOP leaders urging them to consider pairing an Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) emergency temporary COVID-19 standard with liability protections in the next coronavirus aid package. House Democrats’ Heroes Act would require the agency to establish such a standard, but most Republicans have been opposed to including such a provision in any aid package because they are averse to imposing new rules on business. “Simply put, if businesses abide by the OSHA standards, they should be protected from baseless lawsuits,” the Republican lawmakers wrote. They added issuing an emergency standard would not only protect workers but “reduce the size of a ‘second wave’ of infections as the economy reopens.” Democrats and labor unions have been pushing OSHA to issue mandatory COVID-19-specific safety protections for workers, which, so far, the agency has declined to do. The Department of Labor maintains neither a temporary nor a permanent mandatory standard is necessary because OSHA can enforce protections under its other standards regarding respiratory protection and blood-borne pathogens. Safety advocates have complained those standards do not address risks posed by infectious illnesses like COVID-19. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The GOP unveiled a proposal on July 14, led by Sen. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, and backed by Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee Chair Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., that would create a standalone grant program to provide up to nine months of financial assistance to childcare providers via states and tribal organizations for COVID-19-related operating expenses, including cleaning, employee training, PPE and more. Rather than make any new appropriations, the bill would authorize “such sums as necessary.” However, Ernst and Sen. Kelly Loeffler, R-Ga., offered a resolution in May proposing the next coronavirus relief package include \$25 billion for childcare providers, and Ernst said on July 14 she was still advocating for that level of funding, which could be used to execute her proposal. Democrats have taken a significantly different approach. Rep. Rosa DeLauro’s, D-Conn., and Senate HELP Committee Ranking Member Patty Murray’s, D-Wash., Child Care Is Essential Act, introduced in May, would appropriate \$50 billion for a new program within the existing Child Care and Development Block Grant Program, which would cover 	

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<p>operating expenses for childcare providers affected by the coronavirus pandemic both during and after the public health crisis.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Restaurant Association wrote a letter on July 15 to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif.; House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif.; Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky.; and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., urging lawmakers to include a variety of measures to shore up the industry, including: a \$120 billion relief fund for the restaurant industry, a second round of Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans, a tax break that would allow businesses to deduct expenses paid for with forgiven PPP loans, and more funding for Economic Injury Disaster Loans. There's already a bill backed by Sens. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., and Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz., that would set up a dedicated relief fund for restaurants, for which the National Restaurant Association and the Independent Restaurant Coalition have lobbied for months. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than 100 industry groups, led by the National Association of Manufacturers, called on Congress to move forward with a long-term infrastructure bill. In a letter dated July 15, to congressional leadership, the groups encouraged bipartisan cooperation to provide investment and pass a surface transportation reauthorization ahead of a September 30 deadline, when the previous law that authorized surface transportation funding for five years is set to expire. Groups on the letter include the American Concrete Pavement Association, American Forest & Paper Association, American Beverage Association, National Lime Association, National Marine Manufacturers Association, National Mining Association, Steel Manufacturers Association, Aluminum Association and the U.S. Tire Manufacturers Association. You can read more here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> U.S. Representatives Mike Johnson, R-La., a member of President Trump's Task Force for Reopening America, and Lou Correa, D-Calif., led on July 14 a bipartisan coalition of 12 members calling for COVID-19 liability protections for healthcare providers and facilities, businesses and nonprofit organizations that have followed public health guidelines. The letter notes that while those harmed by bad actors ought to have the ability to seek justice, organizations that have made good faith efforts to follow public health guidelines deserve reasonable safeguards from frivolous lawsuits related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Read the letter here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Democratic lawmakers asked on July 14 the Treasury and the Federal Reserve to make it easier for state and local governments to tap into an emergency lending program because it is being "vastly underutilized." In a letter to Fed Chair Jerome Powell and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, Sens. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., Chris Van Hollen, D-Md., and Catherine Cortez Masto, D-N.V., said restrictive lending terms in place for the Fed's so-called Municipal Liquidity Facility could be to blame. They warned ignoring the needs of governments could undo efforts to stabilize the economy. "We are concerned that, without additional efforts from the Fed and Treasury, giant corporations will reap all the benefits of this recovery while cities and states are left behind and suffer needless economic devastation," the lawmakers said. They said Congress should also immediately provide more direct federal assistance to state and local governments. The letter is available here. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said on July 14 that she will delay the House's August recess if the time is needed to reach a deal to renew enhanced unemployment benefits and other coronavirus relief expiring at the end of this month. The Senate plans to reconvene next week and begin work on additional aid package. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senate Democrats want Congress to include \$25 billion in the next coronavirus stimulus package to research, manufacture, purchase and distribute COVID-19 vaccines. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee Ranking Member Patty Murray, D-Wash., and others released the recommendations in a new white paper. They proposed that any COVID-19 vaccine be provided to Americans at no cost. Senate Democrats also want the Trump administration to explain how they would distribute any vaccines. Read the white paper here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rep. Morgan Griffith, R-Va., announced July 14 that he has tested positive for COVID-19, making him the ninth member of Congress with a confirmed or presumed case. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Senate remains in recess until July 20. The House will hold held virtual hearings during the week of July 13. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over the weekend of July 11, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., told CNN's Dana Bash that Republicans must agree to extending the \$600 direct payment in unemployment benefits in order to pass the next coronavirus relief package. The Trump Administration, Senate Republicans and Democrats have been laying down markers over the past several weeks over what each side wants to be included in the final package. Negotiations will begin the second half of July, but Pelosi also laid out other key issues Democrats will be pushing for — food stamps, money for absentee voter programs and OSHA standards. There's also state and local funding, and Republicans want to overhaul liability laws. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On July 9, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., rejected the notion Democrats would cave to Republican demands for liability protections for businesses from lawsuits brought forth by workers who get sick on the job. As dozens of states have experienced a spike in cases in recent weeks, Pelosi said Republicans will be forced to accept an emergency aid package much larger than the \$1 trillion figure GOP leaders had floated just a few weeks ago. Additionally, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., recently expressed a new interest in another round of direct payments, though he suggested eligibility should be limited to those earning less than \$40,000 a year, down from \$99,000 in the CARES Act. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The House approved the Protecting Nonprofits from Catastrophic Cash Flow Strain Act of 2020 (S. 4209) by voice vote on July 9. The bill would help non-profits offset the costs of unemployment benefits for their workers. The CARES Act provided additional relief for reimbursable employers, such as non-profits and state and local governments, to help offset the costs of unemployment benefits by 50%. However, the Department of Labor released guidance requiring states to collect 100% of the amount owed by reimbursable employers up front. The bill clarifies non-profits do not have to pay the full amount and then wait for the 50% reimbursement. The bill will relieve unnecessary financial burden on non-profits that were forced to lay off workers. The Senate passed the measure last week, and it is expected to be signed into law. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On July 9, the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce held a hearing titled “Consumers Beware: Increased Risks During the COVID-19 Pandemic.” Witnesses included Kevin Anderson, Senior Deputy Attorney General, Director, Consumer Protection Division, North Carolina Department of Justice; Sally Greenberg, Executive Director, National Consumers League; and Thomas Quaadman, Executive Vice President, Center for Capital Markets Competitiveness. The hearing covered the expansion of e-commerce and online services; liability protections; a federal, standardized privacy law; lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) and testing supplies; artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies; empowering the FTC; and vulnerable populations such as the elderly. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reps. Dan Kildee, D-Mich., and Danny Davis, D-Ill., led more than 100 House Democrats in sending a letter to President Trump, arguing the extension of jobless benefits in a fifth coronavirus relief bill is essential to economic recovery. A potential extension of the \$600-a-week unemployment benefit is set to be one of the highest barriers to a bipartisan deal as Congress prepares to launch negotiations on a fifth round of emergency pandemic relief, which leaders from both parties want to finalize by the end of July. Trump and top administration officials have said they oppose an extension of the \$600 supplemental, arguing it creates a disincentive for those workers to seek jobs. As an alternative approach, some Republicans are pushing for a back-to-work bonus, which would provide laid-off workers receiving unemployment benefits a one-time payment if they return to the workforce. The letter is here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There’s a growing bipartisan coalition pushing for emergency funding for the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (now GusNIP, formerly known as FINI), which supports initiatives like “Double Up Food Bucks” to give Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants extra benefits to spend on produce at grocery stores and farmers markets. A June letter to House leadership, led by Reps. Dan Kildee, D-Mich., and Rick Crawford, R-Ark., was signed by nearly 80 members on both sides of the aisle. A similar coalition is currently being organized in the Senate. The ask is backed by the Fair Food Network, which pioneered the Double Up Food Bucks program, as well as the National Grocers Association, the United Fresh Produce Association, the U.S. Apple Association, National Potato and the Farm Credit Council. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of SNAP households using EBT benefits online has shot up more than twenty-fold during the pandemic, with Amazon and Walmart earning most of that business. USDA said it did not have data to share on total dollar amounts spent online. Read more. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., on Thursday rejected the Trump administration’s calls to limit the next coronavirus relief package to \$1 trillion, arguing that Congress will need to approve at least double that amount amid a surge in cases. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The revelation that well-heeled businesses and nonprofits benefited from the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) is making it more likely Congress will impose new limits on aid in its next rescue plan for employers and workers. This comes as the Small Business Administration (SBA) disclosed the recipients of more than \$521 billion in forgivable loans 	

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<p>on July 6 and revealed loan recipients such as top lobbying and law firms, private equity-backed restaurant chains, investment companies and even Kanye West’s clothing brand. As \$130 billion remains uncommitted under the PPP, the disclosures are spurring new calls from lawmakers for oversight of whether many of the program's loan recipients should have received the money. "It’s important for taxpayers and for the administration to ask whether some of these companies followed the rules... Moving forward, Congress should ensure that the affected small businesses receive the assistance they need – not celebrity clothing lines or companies already determined to be ineligible," Rep. Ben McAdams, D-Utah, said on July 7.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On July 8, the House Homeland Security Committee held a hearing titled “Examining the National Response to the Worsening Coronavirus Pandemic.” Witnesses included J. B. Pritzker, Governor of Illinois; Jason Shelton, Mayor of Tupelo, Mississippi; Dr. Umair A. Shah, Harris County, Texas Public Health Executive Director; and Ret. Col. Brian Hastings, Alabama Emergency Management Agency Director. The committee discussed how states and localities have responded to the pandemic, guidance and support from the federal government, supply chain problems, access to testing, increased wait times for test results and access to personal protective equipment. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On July 6, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said he would “likely” introduce a fifth coronavirus bill in a few weeks. Senate Republicans are expected to make a final decision on this legislation once they return from a two-week break on July 20. Once the Senate returns, Senate Republicans would have only a matter of weeks to unveil a coronavirus proposal and try to negotiate an agreement with Democrats. The House passed a nearly \$3 trillion bill largely along party lines in May, but that bill has been declared dead on arrival in the GOP-controlled Senate and with the administration. The administration and the Senate GOP are in agreement that the next stimulus should be at or below \$1 trillion — although the administration has voiced recognition it could balloon a bit higher. McConnell said a next package would likely focus on liability reform, children in school, jobs and health care. The Senate GOP and the administration are currently opposed to extending the \$600 enhanced unemployment benefit, but supports another round of stimulus checks. On July 6, McConnell said that the next coronavirus package “could well” include another round of direct payments to individuals hit hard by the coronavirus, but in a more targeted way — “I think the people who have been hit the hardest are people who make about \$40,000 a year or less.” Money for state and local governments is shaping up to be a collision point between Republicans and Democrats. As has been previously reported, liability protection is a red line for Senate Majority Leader McConnell. However, while the administration is supportive of liability reform, it has not drawn any red lines. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On July 3, Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., announced he will introduce legislation banning the sale of tickets for middle seats for as long as the coronavirus pandemic is impacting the U.S. He flew on an American Airlines flight on June 2 and tweeted about the company’s alleged irresponsibility. American Airlines did not respond directly to Merkley’s tweets but did respond to a Twitter user who expressed concern over his initial tweet, noting it has “implemented many layers of protection including enhanced cleaning and requiring face coverings.” Additionally, on July 2, Sen. Bernie Sanders, I- 	

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<p>Vt., sent a letter to Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao and Transportation Administrator Stephen Dickson raising concerns over American Airlines’ announcement it will book flights to capacity starting in July.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> U.S. Rep. Greg Gianforte, R-Mont., and State Auditor Matt Rosendale, respective candidates for Montana Governor and Congress, are self-quarantining after Kimberly Guilfoyle, the girlfriend of Donald Trump Jr., tested positive for the coronavirus several days after they attended a campaign event at Big Sky, Mont. Both candidates have suspended in-person events pending test results. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Senate is in recess until July 20. The House will conduct “committee work days” during the week of July 6, with no votes expected. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The House and Senate each passed a measure (S. 4116) by unanimous consent to extend the application period for Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans through August 8. There remains more than \$130 billion in unused funds authorized through the program. The legislation awaits President Donald Trump’s signature to extend the deadline. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin has indicated that the Administration is interested in using the leftover funds to continue to support small businesses. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reps. Ann Wagner, R-Mo., Chair of the House Suburban Caucus, and William Lacy Clay, D-Mo., introduced the Calculate Loan Forgiveness Act to help lenders and PPP loan recipients easily determine the loan forgiveness amount. The bill would require the Administrator of the Small Business Administration (SBA), in coordination with the Secretary of the Treasury, to establish a free, publicly accessible online calculator and/or certify free, accurate and publicly accessible third-party calculators in order to provide certainty and assistance to lenders and small businesses as they fill out PPP loan forgiveness forms. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senate Republicans are beginning to put together a new COVID-19 aid package. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said, "What I can tell you without fear of contradiction is the focus will be kids, jobs, and health care." McConnell also said it will have liability protections. Democrats have urged McConnell to start bipartisan negotiations. Senate Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee Chair Roy Blunt, R-Mo., said the panel is working on legislation that would provide funding for more testing and additional work on therapeutics and vaccine research and distribution. Blunt said his staff will be looking at how to ensure schools throughout the country can get access to the large volume of tests they will need to allow students and teachers back into the classroom as early as August. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senate Finance Committee Ranking Member Ron Wyden, D-Ore., and Sens. Tammy Baldwin, D-Wisc., Chris Van Hollen, D-Md., Michael Bennet, D-Colo., and Cory Booker, D-N.J., introduced the Jobs for Economic Recovery Act to provide immediate funding for states, tribes and local governments to create or expand employment programs through a new Social Security Act jobs program, which would finance six months of wages for public, private or nonprofit jobs. Funds could also be used for job training and services like childcare to help workers succeed upon completion of their job placement. The bill would fund state programs at a matching rate determined by economic conditions and the state’s 	

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<p>FMAP rate. When the unemployment rate is above 7%, there will be a dollar-for-dollar federal match. By 2022, the bill would require programs to meet new criteria and rely on evidence-based practices to continue receiving funding. The bill also creates an employee retention tax credit based on the Work Opportunity Tax Credit for employers who retain workers hired through the program for 24 months. A copy of the bill text is available here. A section-by-section summary of the bill is available here.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On July 1, Senate Democrats proposed long-term extensions to the temporary \$600-per-week payments to unemployed Americans. The program began at the end of March and is set to expire on July 31, as the June 5 unemployment rate stood at 13.3%. Under the Democrats’ legislation, these federally backed benefits would fall by \$100 for every percentage-point decrease in a state’s unemployment rate, until joblessness falls below 6%. On June 30, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said the \$600-per-week payments are a disincentive to return to work. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On June 30, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., gave his clearest signal yet that Republicans are willing to move swiftly on another coronavirus relief package, after some states saw a spike in cases. He said the Senate will focus on the next package when it returns from the two-week July 4 recess, with the goal of finishing before both chambers depart for their lengthy August break. McConnell made it clear the Senate will leave for the August recess, saying, “We’re gonna stay on the schedule that I’ve announced earlier in the year, which means we will not be here in August.” McConnell said the July 4 recess “dovetails nicely with the perfect time, to take an assessment of the economy and the progress we’re making on the health care front and see if there is additional assistance needed for our health care providers.” Republicans and Democrats are divided over what to do with billions of dollars in programs that are set to expire at the end of July, such as the extra \$600 per week in jobless benefits. Many lawmakers of both parties hoped the economy would rebound on its own as soon as states began to loosen their restrictions on businesses. However, the gradual reopening in some parts of the country has instead spurred another spike in cases, creating further financial uncertainty in states like Texas and Florida. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nineteen Democratic Senators called on the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to answer questions on the potential link between exposure to toxic per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) chemicals and the coronavirus. The Senators, led by Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H., wrote to HHS Secretary Alex Azar last week that more research is needed on the connection between the chemicals and COVID-19 and called on the Secretary to ensure the link is "thoroughly examined so that individuals in communities impacted by PFAS can take precautions that are guided by scientific evidence." The Senators pointed to a June statement from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry that expressed concern over how exposure to PFAS can impact COVID-19 infection. They asked whether the NIH plans to fund any research into the interaction of PFAS exposure and COVID-19. The letter is available here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The evening of June 30, the Senate passed a bill that would extend the Paycheck Protection Program until Aug. 8, just hours before the window to approve small business loans closed at midnight. The legislation also needs to be passed by the House and signed by President Trump. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The American Beverage Association, in a coalition of states, cities, companies, trade groups and unions, sent a letter to Senate leadership urging them to include “robust and direct stimulus” for state and local governments in the next coronavirus relief bill. “As we move closer to the end of the budget year, furloughs and job cuts are on the table for many states and localities,” they wrote to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y. “These jobs losses not only affect the provision of government services, but also add to state unemployment. The damage will get far worse without federal assistance, forcing drastic cuts that will further delay and cancel infrastructure projects, as at least 26 states have announced construction delays for transportation projects.” Read the letter in full here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Today, National Institute on Allergy and Infectious Diseases Director Anthony Fauci told a Senate health committee hearing that the outbreak is moving in the “wrong direction” and expressed alarm about spikes in states he said may have relaxed social distancing and lockdowns too early so they could restart their economies. He went on to say that he would not be surprised to see 100,000 cases in the U.S. per day if coronavirus trends don’t change. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With the deadline to apply for the Paycheck Protection Program coming just before midnight on June 30, Sens. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., and Ben Cardin, D-Md., are leading a group considering how best to use the remaining funds to help small businesses as they begin to reopen. There is currently \$130 billion left unused in the program. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On June 29, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., sent a letter to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., urging him to start negotiations on the next coronavirus package. Senate Republicans are expected to wait until after they return from the Independence Day break to start negotiations and drafting on a potential fifth bill. McConnell said on June 26 if there is a fifth coronavirus bill, it would come together in July, and the Senate would take the lead on drafting it. Pelosi and Schumer wrote, “It is unacceptable that the Senate would recess without addressing this urgent issue. On behalf of the millions of American families who desperately need Congressional action, we demand you change your mind and decide to work with us for the good of the country.” 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As coronavirus cases surge nationwide, several GOP lawmakers are urging people to use face coverings. Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wy., tweeted a picture of her father, Dick Cheney, wearing a mask. Reps. Chris Stewart, R-Utah, Rick Crawford, R-Ark., and Debbie Lesko, R-Ariz., and Sens. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., and Marco Rubio, R-Fla., have indicated their support for the widespread public usage of face coverings. Meanwhile, House Minority Whip Steve Scalise, R-La., and Reps. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, and Mark Green, R-Tenn., have continued to push back on face coverings. Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee Chair Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., said on June 28, “If wearing masks is important, and all the health experts tell us that it is in containing the disease in 2020, it would help if from time to time the president would wear one to help us get rid of this political debate that says if you’re for Trump, you don’t wear a mask, if you’re against Trump, you do.” When asked if the American public should look to Trump for public health advice, Alexander said people should listen to health experts. Trump has been hesitant to be seen wearing 	

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<p>a mask in public, saying masks are “a double-edged sword” and suggesting they were being worn as a political statement by those against him.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a June 27 editorial, The Washington Post’s Editorial Board urged Congress to provide liability protections for colleges and universities. The Editorial Board notes “the goal should be a requirement that plaintiffs prove they were harmed due to something more than mere negligence, the usual benchmark in tort law.” Read the piece in full here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On June 25, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said on the Senate floor that Senate Democrats will try to pass additional coronavirus legislation next week, including housing and rental assistance, hazard pay for essential workers, small business aid, funding to help schools reopen, state and local assistance and an extension of unemployment insurance. Schumer argued more money cannot wait. Schumer can try this through a procedural move, but success is unlikely, and Leader McConnell, R-Ky., has already said any action on the next relief packaging will come after the July 4 recess. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The House Rules Committee will meet on June 29 to discuss the massive infrastructure package from House Democrats. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In recent letters to lawmakers, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and SBA Administrator Jovita Carranza said by the end of next week they expect to give lawmakers "full access to all PPP loan-level information – including, but not limited to, all borrower names and loan amounts." Mnuchin and Carranza said they were sharing the data with the understanding that "nonpublic personally identifiable and commercially sensitive business information will be treated as confidential." 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On June 25, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a new report looking at how agencies have used \$2.6 trillion in economic relief funds appropriated in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the report, the GAO said the \$670 billion Paycheck Protection Program, which offers small business loans that can be forgiven in exchange for maintaining payroll, had limited safeguards and insufficient guidance and oversight planning — all of which have increased the likelihood that borrowers may misuse or improperly receive loans. Read the report here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On June 23, the House Energy and Commerce Committee held a hearing entitled “Oversight of the Trump Administration's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.” Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, testified that the nation is experiencing a “disturbing surge” of infections as states reopen too quickly and without adequate plans for testing and tracing the contacts of those infected. Dr. Robert Redfield, the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), also warned the outbreak would coincide with flu season later this year, straining hospitals and health workers. Consequently, Redfield encouraged Americans to get a flu shot, adding “this single act will save lives.” Members and panelists also focused on vaccine development, telehealth, data collection, community outreach and sustaining long-term cooperation between the government and the private sector. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Senate GOP is now beginning to seriously discuss the next coronavirus relief bill. Republicans met on June 23 with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin during their weekly luncheon to plot their next legislative moves. “We’re going to 	

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<p>take our time and make sure that we're thoughtful. Whatever we do, it will be much more targeted, much more focused on jobs — bringing back jobs — and making sure we take care of our kids,” Mnuchin said. One of the ideas being floated for the next bill is another round of checks for Americans. President Donald Trump has expressed support for more stimulus checks, while Mnuchin told reporters that “it will be one of the things we’re discussing.” And House Democrats included more direct payments to households in their \$3 trillion bill that they passed in May; but so far, Republicans aren’t embracing the idea.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On June 23, Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., spoke out against President Trump’s ban on immigration, saying such programs are helpful to the U.S. economy, and anyone who believes they are not, does not understand the U.S. economy. “Before coronavirus, legal immigration and programs like these played an important role in helping President Trump create the strongest economy in generations. I have little doubt that programs like these would help him build it again,” Graham said. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On June 22, Reps. Van Taylor, R-Texas; Denny Heck, D-Wash.; Andy Barr, R-Ky.; and Al Lawson, D-Fla., led a bipartisan letter of more than 100 Members of Congress urging Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell to provide economic support to the commercial real estate market, especially businesses with Commercial Mortgage-Backed Security debt. The letter specifically requests the Department of the Treasury and the Federal Reserve to consider targeted economic support to bridge the temporary liquidity deficiencies facing commercial real estate borrowers created by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, businesses across the country have experienced revenue declines and cash flow shortages, making it difficult to meet monthly debt obligations and ultimately, threatening the livelihood of their business. While Congress and federal agencies have provided critical assistance to many businesses experiencing financial hardship through programs such as the Payroll Protection Program (PPP) and Main Street Lending Programs, these initiatives do not fit the needs of the commercial real estate market. The letter can be found here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senate Agriculture Chair Pat Roberts, R-Kan., and ranking member Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., are urging USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue to extend the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) regulatory flexibilities through Sept. 30 via a letter from the committee. These flexibilities make it easier for states to continue serving WIC participants during the pandemic, including allowing families to sign up and get their benefits remotely. Read the letter here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ranking member on the Senate Appropriations subcommittee Senator Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., introduced on June 23 the Frontline At-Risk Manual (FARM) Laborers Protection Act. This legislation establishes protections, including 10 days of paid leave and hazard pay, for America’s agricultural workers. He was joined by Senators Patrick Leahy, D-Vt.; Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn.; Bernie Sanders, I-Vt.; Kamala Harris, D-Calif.; and Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass. Summary of the legislation can be found here. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On June 25, the House will come back into session for two days, the first normally scheduled week since mid-March. Speaker Pelosi, D-Calif., and Majority Leader McConnell, R-Ky., have not changed their stance on a required testing regimen, but getting tested is now easier for members of Congress as the Office of the Attending Physician and the D.C. Department of Health will provide coronavirus tests to members of Congress upon request. “Testing is available through the Office of the Attending Physician consistent with guidance from the CDC. We continue to examine additional testing as more testing is in fact becoming more readily available,” McConnell’s spokesman David Popp said in a statement. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The House Ways and Means Select Revenue Measures Subcommittee held on June 18 a hearing entitled “Tax Relief to Support Workers and Families During the COVID-19 Recession.” Key takeaways by issue: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tax Credit Relief—Members discussed the viability of increasing various individual tax credits to provide relief. Witnesses agreed that these proposals would help workers and families affected by the pandemic-induced recession; Direct Stimulus Payments—Democratic members of the committee asked whether workers will need further direct economic stimulus and witnesses responded that stimulus payments help but expanding tax credits would help more; Other Relief Efforts—Members discussed methods to provide relief to workers, such as paid leave and increasing low-income housing availability; Economic Recovery—Committee members asked how best to stimulate economic recovery and witnesses agreed further stimulus or relief will be most effective; Returning to Work—Committee Republicans asked how to incentivize workers to return to work and witnesses asserted that employees will return to work when the virus is controlled and workplaces are safe; and Disproportionate Effect of the Pandemic—Members discussed the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on minorities and people of color. Witnesses described proposals to address systemic inequity and target relief to communities of color. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The House Committee on Homeland Security held on June 18 a hearing entitled “Climbing Again: Stakeholder Views on Resuming Air Travel in the COVID-19 Era” to discuss challenges in developing health and safety measures and in gaining public confidence in air travel. Members and witnesses weighed the implications of biometric non-touch technologies, temperature checks and self-administered health assessments as supplements to social distancing and mask requirements. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Congressional Oversight Commission – comprised of Rep. French Hill, R-Ark., Bharat Ramamurti, Rep. Donna Shalala, D-Fla., and Sen. Pat Toomey, R-Penn., – released its second report June 18 to review the use of \$500 billion appropriated to the Federal Reserve and the Department of the Treasury by the CARES Act passed on March 27. The Commission’s report summarizes how the two entities are using CARES Act funding for various lending programs. The 	

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<p>Commission still lacks a chairman, to be jointly appointed by Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee Chair Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., announced the committee will hold two hearings soon. The first, scheduled for June 23, is titled “COVID-19: Lessons Learned to Prepare for the Next Pandemic.” The witness list includes Former U.S. Senate Majority Leader William Frist, MD; Chief Medical Executive and Chief Deputy Director for Health at the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Joneigh S. Khaldun, MD, MPH, FACEP; Executive Vice President and Chief Patient Officer at Merck & Co., Inc. and Co-Chair at the CSIS Commission on Strengthening America’s Health Security Julie L. Gerberding, MD, MPH; and Former HHS Secretary Gov. Michael O. Leavitt. The hearing will highlight a report from earlier this month on lessons learned from the pandemic. The second hearing, scheduled for June 30, will be focused on getting back to school and work. Several administration officials will participate, including the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease Director Anthony Fauci, MD; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Robert Redfield, MD; Assistant Secretary for Health at the Department of Health & Human Services ADM Brett Giroir, MD; and the Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Stephen Hahn, MD. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On June 18, nearly 2,500 organizations from across the country signed on to a letter urging the Senate to boost SNAP benefits in the next coronavirus relief package. The letter asks for a 15% boost in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) maximum benefit, an increase in the SNAP minimum monthly benefit from \$16 to \$30 and a suspension of SNAP time limits and rules changes that would cut SNAP eligibility and benefits. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., and Rep. Earl Blumenauer, D-Ore, rolled out a bill this morning that would set up a \$120 billion grant program to help restaurants with fewer than 20 locations that aren’t publicly traded. This legislation is supported by both the Independent Restaurant Coalition and the National Restaurant Association. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The House Committee on Small Business held a hearing on June 17 entitled “Paycheck Protection Program: Loan Forgiveness and Other Challenges” to discuss challenges incurred by small businesses thus far, how to move forward in the loan forgiveness process and suggestions for reforming the program. The discussion highlighted the implications of PPP public disclosures for more equitable disbursement of the loans, particularly for minority-owned and micro-businesses. Members and witnesses discussed the benefits of automatic loan forgiveness for loans under \$150,000, which represents most PPP loans. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On June 16, the House Financial Services Committee held a hearing entitled “Cybercriminals and Fraudsters: How Bad Actors Are Exploiting the Financial System During the COVID-19 Pandemic” to discuss cybersecurity attacks from foreign actors, potential threats to networks due to telework and reallocating the Secret Service to the Department of the Treasury. The discussion highlighted the need for ongoing cybersecurity trainings and the importance of a unified collective defense against cyber threats focused on bridging the gap between public and private institutions. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sen. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, announced on June 16 that she will introduce legislation requiring lawmakers to disclose if they or their families have personally benefited from the small business Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), which Congress created in response to the coronavirus crisis but did not include disclosure requirements. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sens. Ted Cruz, R-Texas; Rick Scott, R-Fla.; and Ron Johnson, R-Wis., sent a letter to governors on June 16 requesting information on how their states have allocated the trillions of dollars in taxpayer funding from the CARES Act and other federal coronavirus response measures. The Senators said, “This taxpayer money is designed to be spent on coronavirus response to support those in need, and taxpayers deserve to know how this money is being spent.” They asked for response by June 26 and included questions such as whether the state has used or plans to use the Federal Reserve’s Municipal Liquidity Facility; whether the state has applied for FEMA Disaster Relief Funds; and how much federal funding for the coronavirus response the state has received, allocated and spent so far. The letter is available here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As of June 16, the House will now require masks during committee hearings, per new guidance issued by the Capitol physician. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the House Select Committee on the Coronavirus Crisis announced on June 15 an investigation into the disbursement of Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans from eight bank lenders. The committee alleges the banks created a two-tiered system of applications that favored wealthier applicants. The Members also sent a letter to Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Small Business Administrator (SBA) Jovita Carranza requesting information on the disbursement of loans. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The following Congressional hearings are scheduled for the week of June 15: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wednesday, June 17 at 1:00pm: House Small Business Committee: Paycheck Protection Program: Loan Forgiveness and Other Challenges ○ Thursday, June 18 at 12:00pm: House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Select Revenue Measures: Tax Relief to Support Workers and Families during the COVID-19 Recession 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White House and Republican negotiators are not planning to hold formal negotiations on a fourth coronavirus stimulus package until late July when Congress returns from recess, according to two senior administration officials and two senior GOP aides. The Senate and House are scheduled to return to Washington on July 21, after two weeks working and campaigning in their home districts, and 10 days before certain critical programs under the CARES Act, like increased unemployment insurance payments, are set to expire. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senators in Iowa introduced a bill to support hand sanitizer and ethanol production by extending FDA guidance. Senator Grassley made a statement on the bill saying, “Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, many businesses and industries have answered the call to help their communities, including those in the ethanol and biofuels industry. As businesses shift production to create alcohol-based hand sanitizer products, they need adequate certainty that investments made by ethanol producers in changing facility processes wouldn’t be lost overnight to a sudden change in policy from FDA.” 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., released a set of proposals to improve America’s ability to respond to future public health crises. He is also crowdsourcing suggestions from the public. In a white paper on “Preparing for the Next Pandemic,” Alexander identified five priorities: accelerating research and development of tests, treatments, and vaccines; expanding disease surveillance capability; rebuilding the Strategic National Stockpile; beefing up state and local public health departments; and improving coordination of federal agencies during a public health emergency. Anyone with ideas may submit them by June 26 to PandemicPreparedness@help.senate.gov. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On June 10, the House Oversight and Reform Committee held a hearing entitled “No Worker Left Behind: Supporting Essential Workers” to discuss risks faced by essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic and how to properly protect and compensate these employees. Democratic members expressed their support for Rep. Carolyn Maloney’s, D-N.Y., H.R. 6909 (Pandemic Heroes Compensation Act of 2019) to provide hazard protections to essential workers. Republican members asserted that reopening the economy would help support essential workers and expressed support for taking action against China for its role in the spread of COVID-19. A summary is available here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On June 9, the House Oversight and Reform Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy held a briefing to discuss the uses, abuses and limitations of antibody testing as well as the federal government’s response to COVID-19. Members expressed concern about the nearly 200 antibody tests currently on the market not yet approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The witnesses, who included several public health experts, discussed whether manufacturers of antibody tests should be allowed to market the tests before they receive approval. Additionally, the witnesses unanimously agreed antibody tests should be used for public health purposes but should not be used to inform individual-level decisions like whether to return to work or abandon social distancing principles. A summary is available here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works will hold a hearing on June 17 entitled “Responding to the Challenges Facing Recycling in the United States.” Witnesses will include representatives from the Consumer Brands Association and The Recycling Partnership. Read more here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On June 9, The Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee held a hearing entitled “Oversight of Housing Regulators” to discuss the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Federal Housing Finance 	

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<p>Agency’s (FHFA) response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The discussion focused on eviction protections and forbearance programs for borrowers or renters that lost income, as well as the efforts of HUD and FHFA to address racial and economic inequities in the housing system. Summary available here.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On June 9, the Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing entitled “COVID-19 Fraud: Law Enforcement’s Response to Those Exploiting the Pandemic” to discuss bad actors taking advantage of the current public health crisis to commit fraud. Democratic members focused their discussion on price-gouging of medical supplies and consumer goods, while Republicans discussed foreign scammers and fraud within economic relief programs. Summary available here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On June 10, the House Oversight and Reform Committee will hold a hearing to examine the health and economic burdens shouldered by essential workers during the coronavirus pandemic. Lawmakers will consider the experiences of first responders, transit workers, healthcare workers, grocery store clerks, custodians and delivery workers, as well as many federal, state, local and tribal employees who worked throughout the pandemic. Witnesses will include union representatives for transit workers, food and commercial workers, nurses, the wife of a deceased essential worker who died of COVID-19 and a representative from the National Urban League. The hearing will focus on the creation of a compensation fund for essential workers. Read more here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On June 8, House Oversight Committee Chairwoman Carolyn Maloney, D-N.Y., said she will be self-quarantining as she awaits the results of a COVID-19 test. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On June 8, members of Senate GOP leadership said that they do not expect to be able to pass another coronavirus relief bill until mid-to-late July. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representatives Lauren Underwood, D-Ill., and John Lewis, D-Ga., led on Friday 62 House Members in a bipartisan letter urging the Department of Health and Human Services to ensure the government is taking all available steps to understand the risks and effects of COVID-19 in pregnant women. The House Members urged Secretary Alex Azar to outline the steps the agency is taking to protect pregnant and postpartum women from the virus and ensure that pregnancy status is included in COVID-19 data collection, documentation, and reporting. The letter also emphasized the importance of ensuring that research efforts include proactive steps to promote racial, ethnic, and geographic diversity among participants. You can view the letter here and the full press release here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On June 5, the House Judiciary Committee sent a letter to the Trump administration asking them to turn over a list of deregulatory actions taken to bolster the economy during the coronavirus pandemic, arguing the White House has been inappropriately fast-tracking priorities unrelated to addressing the virus. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., signaled on June 4 that if there is another COVID-19 relief package, Senate consideration of such a bill will not happen until after the July 4th recess. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The House Appropriations Committee’s Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies held on June 4 a hearing on the COVID-19 response, where Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Dr. Robert Redfield apologized for the CDC’s inadequate response in documenting the nation’s 	

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<p>disproportionately high rates of COVID-19 cases and deaths among Black and Hispanic residents. Additionally, Redfield indicated the federal government and state health departments need to dramatically increase the number of contact tracers, stating that it is fundamental that the United States have a fully operational contact tracing workforce as we move into fall and winter.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimate released on June 4 found that extending by six months the temporary boost to unemployment benefits enacted via coronavirus relief legislation would likely lead to greater economic output in the second half of 2020. However, it also could result in lower employment over the same timeframe, as well as reduced output and employment in 2021. Read more here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sens. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., and Ed Markey, D-Mass., introduced on June 3 the Essential Transportation Employee Safety Act, aimed at addressing workplace safety for essential transportation workers. This legislation would require the Secretary of Transportation to work with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide priority testing for these workers and implement personal protective equipment (PPE) and sanitization requirements. The International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) and Transportation Trades Department-AFL-CIO, the representation for labor unions such as the Air Line Pilots Association, the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA and the Transport Workers Union of America, endorsed the measure. “Transportation workers are critical for getting people to and from work, getting life-saving goods out to hospitals and first responders, moving food for our kitchen tables, and essential goods to stock our stores,” Cantwell said in a press release. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee held on June 4 a hearing titled “Infrastructure: The Road to Recovery.” Witnesses included American Road and Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA) Chairman and HCSS President and Chief Financial Officer Steve McGough; American Action Forum President Dr. Doug Holtz-Eakin; and Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer (who also is incoming president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors). Key issues included community investment, ways to pay for an infrastructure package and surface transportation legislation. Committee members discussed the ways in which a robust infrastructure bill will help communities through: (1) increasing the number of available jobs to help ease job loss caused by the COVID-19 pandemic; (2) increasing investment in public transit; (3) ensuring that infrastructure funding benefits all communities; and (4) ensuring that local leaders have discretionary infrastructure spending. Committee Members also discussed ways in which to pay for an infrastructure package, such as through: (1) increased highway user fees; (2) a vehicle miles traveled tax; or (3) a motor fuels tax. Senator Mike Braun, R-Ind., brought up the idea of using community crossing grants to provide additional funding for local infrastructure projects. Members discussed the Senate’s progress in developing bipartisan surface transportation legislation and witnesses weighed the benefits of a long-term infrastructure plan versus a short-term extension of an existing infrastructure package. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite reports on June 3 that the Senate was struggling to get unanimous consent on the House-passed bill providing flexibility for the Payroll Protection Program (PPP), an agreement was reached on June 3 and the Senate cleared the measure to ease restrictions on small business loans and give recipients more time to repay them. The bill is headed to President Trump’s desk for his signature. Companies can use the money for 24 weeks. You can read the PPP Flexibility Act here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congress’s timeline for the next coronavirus relief package has slipped. Senate lawmakers now say they likely won’t pass something until prior to the August recess. Previously, they were aiming for the July 4 recess. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Senate is struggling to pass the bipartisan House-passed Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) Flexibility Act. Several members have objections. Lawmakers are working to pass legislation during the week of June 1 to help provide flexibility to PPP participants who may look to have their loans forgiven. June 5 marks the conclusion of the original eight-week forgiveness period for loans issued during the initial April roll-out. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On June 2, the House Committee on Energy & Commerce, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations held a hearing, “On the Front Lines: How Governors are Battling the COVID-19 Pandemic.” Witnesses included Colorado Gov. Jared Polis, Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson. The topics included testing, federal assistance and reopening plans. Regarding testing, the Governors responded that states have often needed more assistance from the federal government with regard to testing and that increased testing capabilities are still needed to continue to combat COVID-19, as well as to respond to the virus in the event of a second wave in the fall. On federal assistance, the Governors responded that while they appreciated the federal assistance, it was at times lackluster and delayed, and agreed that transparency and consistency from the federal government is needed moving forward. In response to inquiries from Members of Congress on reopening, the Governors maintained that reopening was based on data on new infection rates, deaths and vulnerability of their population. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On June 1, Rep. Kevin Brady, R-Texas, introduced a bill to give people receiving unemployment benefits who return to work the ability to receive two \$600 weekly payments or one \$1,200 payment. Additionally, the legislation would direct states to have reporting mechanisms for employers to notify states when someone refuses a job offer and would direct states to send notices to unemployment benefits claimants about their state's return-to-work laws and their rights to refuse returning to work. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said the chamber will soon take up the House-passed legislation that would give businesses using the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) extra time to spend the money and more flexibility to use it on a variety of expenses. If no senators raise objections, the Senate might quickly pass the legislation by unanimous consent. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key hearing dates for the week of June 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ June 2 at 11:30am: House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations Virtual Hearing: On the Front Line – How Governors are Battling the COVID-19 Pandemic 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ June 3 at 10:00am: Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship: Perspectives from Main Street: COVID-19’s Impact on Small Business ○ June 3 at 11:00am: House Judiciary: Protecting the Right to Vote During the COVID-19 Pandemic ○ June 3 at 2:30pm: Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation: The State of Transportation and Critical Infrastructure – Examining the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic ○ June 4 at 10:00am: Senate Energy and Public Works: Infrastructure: The Road to Recovery 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In a letter, a bipartisan group of 60 House members called for modest provisions in the next COVID-19 relief package to tackle the mounting federal debt and evaporating trust funds for programs like Medicare and Social Security. The letter was sent on June 1 to House leadership and led by Reps. Scott Peters, D-Calif., and Jodey Arrington, R-Texas. Read the letter here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Food stamps (SNAP) recipients in most states can now use their benefits to buy groceries online during the pandemic, but only from a handful of retailers like Walmart and Amazon. In a letter to Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue on May 29, Rep. Sanford Bishop, D-Ga., said USDA needs to approve more online retailers with a presence in rural states and communities with limited access to grocery stores. Read the letter here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No votes are expected in the House during the week of June 1. An updated 2020 House legislative calendar was released on May 29. It was announced last week that the Senate will stick with its original legislative schedule for the year, with a state work period around the July 4 holiday as well as from August 10 to September 7. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● On May 29, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., told reporters in Fort Thomas, Ky., that the next bill will be the "fourth and final" relief package the Senate does. "We anticipate the decision being made on whether to go forward in about a month," he added. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● On May 29, a group of allied trade organizations and companies, including The Coca-Cola Company and PepsiCo, sent a letter to Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y. The group is calling on Congress for an additional aid package as efforts to pass another coronavirus relief bill drag on. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● On May 28, the House Education and Labor Committee Subcommittee on Workforce Protections held their rescheduled hearing, “Examining the Federal Government’s Actions to Protect Workers from COVID-19.” Witnesses included Loren Sweatt, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and Dr. John Howard, Director for National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). Topics covered during the hearing included: universal workplace standards and guidelines; workforce and industry protections and guidelines; providing protections for workers; and interagency re-opening guidance. When Members asked about guidance that both NIOSH and OSHA have issued on reopening workplaces, and specific guidance for different industries, both Sweatt and Howard responded that their agencies are continually updating the guidance available on their websites. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On May 28, the House overwhelmingly passed H.R. 7010, bipartisan legislation championed by Reps. Dean Phillips, D-Minn., and Chip Roy, R-Texas, which would give Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) borrowers more leeway in how they can use the funds and still have the loans forgiven in exchange for maintaining their payrolls. Specifically, businesses seeking full loan forgiveness would be given more time to spend the money — 24 weeks instead of 8 — and lower the minimum amount that must be spent on payroll from 75% to 60%. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On May 27, both Dr. Anthony Fauci and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., urged Americans to wear masks. “There’s no stigma attached to wearing a mask. There’s no stigma attached to staying six feet apart,” McConnell said at an event back in his home state. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On May 27, Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., ranking member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, introduced the Food Supply Protection Act. The legislation would provide \$5.5 billion in grants, loans and loan guarantees to help small- and medium-sized companies shift their operations to respond to COVID-19, including procuring more personal protective equipment (PPE) and testing. More details here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On May 27, a group of Republican Senators sent a letter to President Trump asking the administration not to restrict temporary work-based visas amid the coronavirus pandemic. Sens. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., John Cornyn, R-Texas, Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, Jim Risch, R-Idaho, Mike Rounds, R-S.D., Todd Young, R-Ind., Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, and James Lankford, R-Okla., note that issuing H-2B and H-2A visas, which are used for seasonal workers, will help economic recovery. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On May 26, Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., along with 20 other GOP lawmakers, sued Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., over the new proxy voting system. House GOP is challenging the voting method, calling it unconstitutional. Four constituents also signed on to the lawsuit, claiming their representation in Congress is at risk of being diluted. It's unlikely that federal courts will settle the matter, as they are notoriously reluctant to wade into internal House machinations. The House sets its own rules and procedures, and judges routinely sidestep questions about them by deferring to the internal prerogatives of the House, often citing the Constitution's language that declares that “[e]ach House may determine the rules of its proceedings.” 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A group of moderate Senate Democrats, including Sens. Chris Coons, D-Del., Doug Jones, D-Ala., Tom Carper, D-Del., and Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., say they are open to considering liability protection for businesses in the next round of coronavirus relief legislation. This continues to be an important marker for Republicans. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said on May 26 that there would “likely” be a fifth coronavirus relief bill “in the next month or so.” 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The House returns for votes on Wednesday, May 27 and Thursday, May 28. The Senate will reconvene on June 1. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A vote is expected on a measure introduced by Representatives Dean Phillips, D-Minn., and Chip Roy, R-Texas, to ease restrictions on how businesses use Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan proceeds. Early indications are that the 	

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<p>Senate is supportive of the Phillips-Roy bill and that senators would move to pass it when they reconvene on June 1. An effort by Senators Marco Rubio, R-Fla.; Susan Collins, R-Maine; Ben Cardin, D-Md.; and Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H., to pass during the week of May 18 their PPPP Extension Act by unanimous consent met with opposition and was unsuccessful.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On May 28 at 10:15am, the House Education and Labor Subcommittee on Workforce Protections will hold its rescheduled hearing: Examining the Federal Government’s Actions to Protect Workers. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On May 21, Energy and Commerce Chairman Frank Pallone, D-N.J., Ranking Member Greg Walden, R-Ore., Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee Chair Diana DeGette, D-Co., and Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee Ranking Member Brett Guthrie, R-Ky., sent a letter to White House Coronavirus Task Force Coordinator Dr. Deborah Birx urging the Trump Administration to develop a national COVID-19 vaccine plan. In the committee’s view, a comprehensive plan should outline plans for development, manufacturing, distribution, provider training, public education and broad access to the vaccine. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The House Clerk is keeping track of proxy letters submitted by Members of Congress. See the list here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The House Select Committee on the Coronavirus Crisis held on May 21 a hearing on “Heroes of the Coronavirus Crisis: Protecting Frontline and Essential Workers During the Pandemic.” The hearing detailed the continued need for more personal protective equipment (PPE), testing and resources for frontline workers as well as the risks associated with reopening economies too quickly. Republicans focused on investigating the origins of the virus, the alleged negligence on the part of the Chinese government and payroll tax cuts. Democrats focused on their recently passed HEROES Act and providing bonus pay to frontline workers. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The House Small Business Committee held on May 21 a virtual forum to discuss business interruption insurance. Republicans favored a public-private model for pandemic-related business insurance coverage while some Democrats argued the COVID-19 pandemic is not specifically excluded from many current policies. Both sides opposed retroactive business insurance payouts, citing unconstitutionality and unaffordability. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senators Marco Rubio, R-Fla.; Susan Collins, R-Maine; Ben Cardin, D-Md.; and Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H., introduced on May 22 the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) Extension Act (summary). The bill would: extend the deadline to apply from June 30 to December 31; allow borrowers 16 weeks to use funds instead of eight (borrowers would not lose forgiveness eligibility if they maintain payroll for the original eight weeks); allow funds to be used for the purchase of PPE and adaptive investments to reopen safely; and clarify the hold harmless provisions for lenders. While Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., is attempting to pass the bill through the Senate by unanimous consent, there are likely to be objections from individual senators that will need to be addressed before the bill can pass. The House will vote during the week of May 25 on a measure introduced by Representatives Dean Phillips, D-Minn., and Chip Roy, R-Texas, to ease restrictions on how businesses use PPP loan proceeds. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Senate has finished its business and will reconvene on June 1. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following on the remarks made by Sen. Cory Gardner’s, R-Colo., to derail the Senate from recess, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., announced that the chamber will take action on Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans when they return. Additionally, Sen. McConnell announced that senators will vote on Gardner’s Great American Outdoors Act when they return in June. Sen. Gardner relented following these announcements. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As for a Phase Four relief bill, there are a few signs that Congress will pass another recovery package at some point this summer. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said at a virtual event hosted by The Hill that there’s a "strong likelihood" they will need another relief bill. Sen. McConnell told President Trump during a private meeting during the week of May 18 that the next piece of legislation has to be under \$1 trillion, according to Axios’ Jonathan Swan. And during an interview with Fox News’s Martha McCallum, McConnell said there is a high likelihood another rescue package would be forthcoming, but it could be awhile before we see progress. On May 21, Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, told The Washington Post’s Paul Kane and CNN’s Lauren Fox that negotiations wouldn’t even begin until the third or fourth week of June. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senators Roy Blunt, R-Mo., Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., and Roger Wicker, R-Miss., have all voiced support for moving on an infrastructure package to fund much-needed road, bridge and transportation projects. This is part of the ongoing discussion in the Senate regarding the need and timing for Phase Four legislation. However, Sen. Cory Gardner, R-Co., has threatened to block the Senate from going into recess for Memorial Day if action is not taken on an additional aid package. Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, expressed similar sentiments. Senate GOP leadership is working to reach an agreement with Sens. Gardner and Collins. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> House leaders have agreed to hold a vote on bipartisan legislation to ease restrictions on how businesses use Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans, which can be forgiven if employers agree to maintain their payroll and avert layoffs during the coronavirus pandemic. Reps. Dean Phillips, D-Minn., and Chip Roy, R-Texas, are working together to draft the bill. The bipartisan legislation that the House is planning to take up during the week of May 25 would give businesses more flexibility in how they use their PPP loans and still have them forgiven. The request has become an urgent demand from restaurants and other industries as shutdown orders nationwide have persisted longer than lawmakers first expected when they created the program in March. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., has not announced specific action on standalone PPP legislation. There also is clear bipartisan support in the Senate. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., sent on May 20 a “Dear Colleague,” which will begin a 45-day “covered period” allowing remote voting by proxy as well as remote committee proceedings. Per the resolution the House passed on May 15, the covered period terminates after 45 days (but could be renewed). 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis will hold a briefing for Members on May 21 at noon on the impact of the coronavirus crisis on medical staff, first responders, grocery store workers, drivers, custodians and other frontline workers. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Congressional Oversight Commission – comprised of Reps. French Hill, R-Ark., and Donna Shalala, D-Fla.; Sen. Pat Toomey, R-Pa.; and Bharat Ramamurti – released on May 18 its first report to review the use of \$500 billion appropriated to the Federal Reserve and the Treasury by the CARES Act passed on March 27. The Commission’s report summarizes how the two entities are using CARES Act funding for various lending programs, noting that funding for the aviation industry is not yet disbursed. The report concludes with a list of questions for the Federal Reserve and the Treasury on lending programs, borrower protections and allocation of funding. The Commission still lacks a chairman, to be jointly appointed by Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sens. Bob Menendez, D-N.J., and Bill Cassidy, R-La., introduced on May 18 a revised bipartisan bill, the State and Municipal Assistance for Recovery and Transition (SMART) Act, which targets \$500 billion in emergency funding to every state, county and community in the country, while prioritizing assistance to the areas with the greatest need. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Senate is in session during the week of May 18 with a number of votes planned on judicial nominees before the chamber breaks for Memorial Day. In the House, lawmakers are not expected to return to Washington until May 27 or 28 to vote on Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act reauthorization, with the schedule up in the air beyond that date. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 6800, the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act, on May 15 by a nearly party-line vote of 208-199. The bill establishes a federal fund to give hazard pay to essential workers; provides another round of direct payments to individuals and families; directs OSHA to develop an enforceable safety standard requiring employers to develop infection control plans for the workplace; funds COBRA subsidies for those who’ve lost employer-provided health care; extends unemployment benefits; and increases minimum SNAP benefits by 15%. The bill does not address liability protections for businesses that remained operational during the COVID-19 pandemic. One Republican, Rep. Peter King, R-NY., joined Democrats in passage and 14 Democrats voted against. There are no plans for the Senate to take up the House Democrats’ HEROES Act. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Democrats also passed on May 15 a rule change to authorize remote voting by proxy and providing for official remote committee proceedings by a party-line vote of 217-189, with three Democrats voting against – Representatives Rick Larsen, D-Wash., Elaine Luria, D-Va., and Tom O’Halloran, D-Ariz. GOP leadership largely panned the rule change over security concerns and said such a dramatic departure from more than 200 years of precedent should have required a two-thirds majority to pass. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The House Education and Labor Subcommittee on Workforce Protections will hold a hearing, “Examining the Federal Government’s Actions to Protect Workers from COVID-19,” on May 20. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capitol officials have decided to keep the Capitol complex closed to the public until June 8, which is when the District of Columbia’s stay-at-home order expires. The decision was made in consultation with the Capitol physician and the House and Senate Sergeants at Arms. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On May 15, The House returned to session. Members have gathered to vote on H.R. 6800, the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act. Voting will last well into the evening. Physical distancing 	

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<p>measures will be in place for the vote, as they were when the House last convened to vote on March 26. The House will also vote on a proposed rule change to authorize remote voting by proxy and providing for official remote committee proceedings. Both bills are expected to pass in near party-line votes.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> House Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Nita Lowey (D-NY) will offer a manager's amendment to the HEROES Act, intended to clarify and refine the text released on Tuesday. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Senate concluded its business for the week yesterday and will reconvene on Monday. There are no plans for the Senate to take up the House bill. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A vote is scheduled in the House for May 15 to consider H.R. 6800, the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act. It is expected to pass in a party-line vote. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> House Democrats released on May 13 their proposed rule change to authorize remote voting by proxy and providing for official remote committee proceedings (summary here). Importantly, the rule does not allow for a general proxy; the Member of Congress must explicitly direct each vote cast. The proxy voting system would only be temporary, however, and one lawmaker could only vote for up to 10 members. The proposal also orders a feasibility study for using technology to vote remotely in the future. A vote on the rules change is scheduled for Friday May 15. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Senate Judiciary Committee held on May 12 a hearing on “Examining Liability During the COVID-19 Pandemic.” During the hearing, Chairman Graham, R-S.C., asked the witnesses if the country would be better off if there were clear and official guidelines released by federal agencies, such as OSHA, that detail best practices for businesses reopening. All panelists said “yes.” Following the exchange, Chairman Graham said the sooner they can pass a regulatory framework, the better off everyone will be. He said he will pass this up to the Administration and encourage these guidelines be made. This must be done by defining limited liability protection and time-in-scope, without rewarding “bad actors.” It was clear via questioning that Senate Republicans seemed amenable to the idea that businesses need liability protection, whereas Senate Democrats argued that liability laws are critical to protecting workers. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition to the letter sent by ABA and 36 allied industry associations to the Chair and Ranking Member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, 21 State Attorneys General sent a similar letter urging the enactment of COVID-19-related liability protections for businesses, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s Institute for Legal Reform shared its report looking at exposure liability, product liability, medical malpractice and securities litigation. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., released on May 13 the details of their remote work plan. The proposal, known as proxy voting, would allow lawmakers to cast votes for colleagues who aren’t in the Capitol in person, marking one of the biggest changes to chamber rules in decades. Lawmakers are expected to vote on the proxy voting change on May 15. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> House Democrats released on May 12 the text of the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act – full text here and summary here. The \$3 trillion relief package is a messaging bill, intended to help 	

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<p>House Democrats lay their policy markers. This will not become law. The Democratic Caucus will host calls May 12-13 to walk through the text, and a vote is expected on May 15. Highlights from the proposal include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ \$500 billion for state governments; \$375 billion for local governments; \$20 billion for tribal relief; and \$20 billion for relief for territories. \$755 million to replenish funds left out of the first CARES package for the District of Columbia to assist with the fiscal impacts of COVID-19. ○ \$3.6 billion for “contingency planning, preparation, and resilience of elections for Federal office.” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Requires states and jurisdictions to establish and make publicly available contingency plans that enable voting in federal elections during a state of emergency. Requires at least 15 consecutive days of early voting for federal elections. Ensures that every voter can access no excuse absentee vote by mail. Goes into effect in the November 2020 election and for each succeeding federal election. Prohibits states from requiring any form of identification to obtain an absentee ballot. ○ Another round of \$1,200 direct payments to Americans. ○ \$10 billion for small businesses. ○ \$10 billion for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increases the SNAP benefit level by 15%. Increases the minimum SNAP benefit to \$30 per month. Waives all work requirements for SNAP. Directs USDA to allow the use of SNAP to purchase hot foods or hot food products ready for immediate consumption from authorized retail food stores. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important to note regarding HEROES Act – neither Congressional Republicans nor the White House are in any hurry to legislate another round of relief. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky, told reporters on May 11, “We have not yet felt the urgency of acting immediately. That time could develop, but I don’t think it has yet.” And when the time is right, Congressional Republicans have their own marker - Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., reiterated on May 12 on the Senate floor that he will insist on liability protection for employers in the post-coronavirus world. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee held on May 12 the first mostly remote hearing with health officials including Dr. Anthony Fauci, appearing remotely, and Committee Chair Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., chairing from his home in Tennessee. During the hearing, Dr. Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), stated that reopening states too soon could lead to “really serious” consequences. However, Dr. Fauci provided some good news, noting that the NIH vaccine trial “moved very quickly,” and they “hope to know ... in the late fall or early winter” If it is successful. Dr Fauci is “cautiously optimistic.” ADM Brett Giroir, Assistant Secretary for Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, said the U.S. expects to test 3.9% of the country during May. He also addressed vaccine costs during the hearing, stating that he would “certainly advocate” that everyone should be able to get the vaccine. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Assistance and Gratitude for Coronavirus Heroes in Agribusiness who are Invaluable to the Nation, or the AG CHAIN Act, was introduced in the House afternoon May 12 by Representatives GT Thompson, R-Pa., and Dwight 	

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<p>Evans, D-Pa. The bill would provide a federal tax holiday and a payroll tax exemption for all essential employees in the food and agriculture industry defined by recent Department of Homeland Security (DHS) guidance.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ahead of the May 12 Senate Judiciary Committee’s hearing on liability, ABA joined with other industries in signing a letter asking Chairman Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., and Ranking Member Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., to provide protection for essential businesses. Read the letter here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House Democrats are still expected to release a “CARES 2” bill early in the week of May 11 – likely late on May 11 or early May 12 – to address ongoing relief needs. The legislation is best characterized as an opening proposal from Democrats as bipartisan and bicameral negotiations with the Administration will be necessary to complete an eventual package. According to an Axios article, the proposal includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Roughly \$1 trillion for state and local governments; ○ More money for hospitals and COVID-19 testing; ○ Roughly \$25 billion to keep the U.S. Postal Service afloat; ○ Expanded nutritional benefits, Medicaid funding and unemployment insurance (which they call ‘paycheck guarantee’); and ○ Another round of direct payments to Americans. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In its first official action, the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis, chaired by House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn, D-S.C., sent letters on May 8 demanding that “large, public corporations immediately return taxpayer funds that Congress intended for small businesses struggling to survive during the coronavirus crisis.” Sent to specific companies, the letters ask recipients to confirm by May 11 if they will return the funds. If the funds will not be returned in all or part, the committee asks each company to produce “all documents and communications (1) between your company and the Small Business Administration and the Department of the Treasury relating to the PPP loan; and (2) between your company and any financial institution relating to the PPP loan, including all applications for a PPP loan” by May 15. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On May 8, Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., said there are “not nearly enough” COVID-19 tests to safely reopen the country. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The House will not be back in session and voting before May 15. The Senate is in session. A number of House and Senate hearings and virtual round tables will be taking place during the week of May 11: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ May 12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 10:00am: Senate Banking and Urban Affairs: “Oversight of Financial Regulators” ▪ 10:00am: Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions: “COVID-19: Safely Getting Back to Work and Back to School” / Dr. Robert Redfield, the head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Dr. Stephen Hahn, the commissioner of the FDA by video conference ▪ 2:30pm: Senate Judiciary Committee: “Examining Liability During the COVID-19 Pandemic” 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ May 13 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 10:00am: Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation: “The State of Broadband Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic” ▪ 10:00am: House Financial Services Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Financial Institutions = “Update from Prudential Regulators” ▪ 1:00pm: House Small Business: “A Conversation with SBA PPP Lenders” ○ May 14 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 10:00am: House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health – “Protecting Scientific Integrity in the COVID-19 Response” ▪ 1:00pm: House Small Business – “First Look: SBA Office of Inspector General Preliminary PPP Report” 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., is trying to finalize a multi-trillion-dollar coronavirus relief package, hoping to put the bill on the House floor during the week of May 11 — a timeline that some senior Democrats dismiss as unlikely. Pelosi had hoped to release the draft bill – which some Democrats worry could cost upward of \$2 trillion – on May 8 but infighting is making consensus difficult. Of note, this legislation will not incorporate House Republican proposals. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On May 8, Sens. Kamala Harris, D-Calif., Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., and Ed Markey, D-Mass., will release their Monthly Economic Crisis Support Act. It expands upon the \$1,200 sent to Americans as part of March’s coronavirus response bill (H.R. 748). The legislation would send a monthly \$2,000 check to people who make less than \$120,000, expand to \$4,000 to married couples who file taxes jointly, and also provide \$2,000 for each child up to three. Read the bill text here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On May 7, the House Financial Services Committee announced a bipartisan agreement to host “virtual roundtables.” While not formal hearings, committee leadership will work together to develop a “standard practice” to follow for all virtual events. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The House Energy and Commerce Committee announced a pair of “Teleconference Forums” over the coming days. On May 8, the full committee will hold a forum to hear from three health experts on COVID-19 testing, contact tracing and surveillance. On May 11, Consumer Protection and Commerce Subcommittee members will hear from Federal Trade Commission Chairman Joseph Simons regarding consumer protection and privacy-related COVID-19 issues. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twenty-four attorneys general co-signed a letter to congressional leadership calling for an overhaul of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) on May 7. The letter asks that Congress limit access to those that need funding, ensure fair access, ensure fair distribution, direct the Small Business Administration (SBA) to better communicate with small businesses, provide more flexibility, increase transparency, improve technical support, direct the SBA to provide more lender guidance and assist the unbanked. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On May 7, President Donald Trump convened by phone the Opening Up America Again Congressional Group. The dialogue focused on a number of topics, including the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), energizing the economy, medical billing, small business relief and more. You can read the White House press statement here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) news: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A bipartisan group of senators including Ron Wyden, D-Ore.; Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa; John Cornyn, R-Texas; Tom Carper, D-Del.; and Marco Rubio R-Fla., introduced on May 6 clarifying legislation to codify that small businesses are able to deduct normal business expenses covered by a forgiven Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan. The Senators said the recent interpretation of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), which would prohibit this practice, runs counter to congressional intent and the bill would restore application of the law as intended. You can read the news release here. ○ In addition, a bipartisan group of 21 senators led by John Cornyn, R-Texas, and Robert Menendez, D-N.J., sent on May 5 a letter asking Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Small Business Administrator Jovita Carranza to raise the PPP non-payroll forgiveness cap from 25 to 50%. Currently, as a condition for loan forgiveness, no more than 25% of PPP funds can be used for non-payroll expenses, such as mortgage payments, rent or utility expenses. You can read the letter here. ○ Senators Michael Bennet, D-Colo., and Todd Young, R-Ind., introduced on May 5 legislation that proposed changes to the PPP. Their bill would: 1) extend the 8-week covered period to 16 weeks for non-publicly traded businesses with fewer than 500 employees; and 2) would create a new RESTART Program that would cover the next six months of payroll, benefits and certain operating expenses for companies experiencing at least 25% revenue loss. You can read a fact sheet here. ○ It was announced on May 7 that Rep. Jimmy Panetta, D-Calif., “is leading work on a bill that would clarify and ease rules on loan forgiveness and payroll requirements,” while Rep. Brad Wenstrup, R-Ohio., is leading a congressional letter geared toward “lengthening the forgiveness period and allowing businesses to use more of the loan to pay rent and suppliers.” Both members seek to address the non-statutory 75% payroll ratio required for forgiveness that has flummoxed borrowers. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sens. Tom Cotton, R-Ark.; Josh Hawley, R-Mo.; Ted Cruz, R-Texas; and Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, sent a letter on May 7 to President Trump asking the administration to suspend “all new guest worker visas” for 60 days, and others for a year “or until unemployment has returned to normal levels.” You can read the letter here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., named on May 7 GOP members for Majority Whip Jim Clyburn's, D-S.C., coronavirus select committee, ending a partisan stalemate over the panel. Members include Minority Whip Steve Scalise, R-LA.; and Reps. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio; Blaine Luetkemeyer, R-Mo.; Jackie Walorski, R-Ind.; and Mark Green, R-Tenn. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> House Minority Leader McCarthy, R-Calif., announced on May 7 a “Republican-led China task force” to look into a number of China-related issues, including the origin of the coronavirus pandemic. Rep. Michael McCaul, R-Texas, the top Republican on the Foreign Affairs Committee, will head the effort. Other members include GOP Conference Chairwoman Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., and Reps. Jim Banks, R-Ind.; Andy Barr, R-Ky.; John Curtis, R-Utah; Anthony Gonzalez, R-Ohio; Darin LaHood, R-Ill.; Mike Gallagher R-Wis.; John Joyce R-Pa.; Adam Kinzinger, R-Ill.; Guy Reschenthaler, R-Pa.; Denver Riggleman, R-Va.; Elise Stefanik, R-N.Y.; Chris Stewart, R-Utah.; and Michael Waltz, R-Fla. You can read McCarthy’s statement here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On May 6, the Senate Banking Committee held a hearing on President Donald Trump’s nomination of Brian Miller to be Special Inspector General for Pandemic Recovery. In this role, Miller would be placed in charge of overseeing a roughly \$500 billion Treasury fund created as part of Congress’s \$2 trillion CARES Act. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On May 5, Senate Democrats, led by Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship Ranking Member Ben Cardin, D-Md., and Senator Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H., sought unanimous consent on the Senate floor to pass legislation that would “provide additional, much-needed transparency and oversight of recently-created small business lending programs.” Senator Marco Rubio, R-Fla., chair of the Senate Small Business Committee, objected. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On May 4, House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., with House Rules Committee Ranking Member Tom Cole, R-Okla., and House Administration Committee Ranking Member Rodney Davis, R-Ill., released a plan to re-open Congress based on four strategies: modifying existing practices and structures; employing a phased return with committees; deploying technology for “virtual” hearings in a progression; and accelerating active risk mitigation practices. They conclude that “every avenue should first be explored that preserves enduring institutional rules while prioritizing member health.” 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dr. Anthony Fauci is expected to now testify on May 12 before the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee after being blocked by the White House from testifying in the House. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., asked House Chairs to submit drafts for a “Cares 2” by close of business on May 4, with the goal of releasing a draft proposal by May 8 that could be ready for a floor vote as soon as the week of May 11. This is without consultation or input from House Republicans, signaling that the next round of negotiations may face even more partisan bickering than the last several rounds. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Senate came back in session on May 4. The Office of the Attending Physician released safety guidelines for the Senate’s return. The guidelines, based on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance, recommend offices limit the number of staffers that come to the Hill and suggest teleworking when possible. The guidelines strongly encourage the use of face coverings, but individuals retain the option of not using a face cover if they maintain a 6-foot distance from others. The House is delaying its return to Washington by at least one more week. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ABA joined other allied associations in signing a letter to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., Leader McConnell, R-Ky., Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., and Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., urging liability protections to help businesses cope with the coronavirus outbreak. Read the letter here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over the weekend of May 2, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., issued a joint statement “respectfully” declining an offer from the Administration to provide rapid coronavirus testing capabilities to Capitol Hill. Congress will continue to use the testing protocols the Office of the Attending Physician put in place until these speedier testing technologies become more widely available. However, in an interview with Politico, Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., said he disagrees with McConnell and Pelosi and wants rapid COVID-19 testing in the Capitol. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., signaled in a Politico article that he has not decided whether to appoint Republicans to Speaker Pelosi’s coronavirus cash oversight panel. “I’m going to make that decision this week, I’ll announce it later this week.” 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competing strategies on help for frontline workers who have kept working throughout the pandemic are emerging on Capitol Hill. Falling across largely partisan fault lines, Democrats favor direct payments to those on the front lines including food production workers, grocery clerks, retail and warehouse workers, and those engaged in delivery operations, while Republicans favor an approach that would suspend tax liability for these workers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sen. Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., introduced a bill to create federal fund for direct payments to essential frontline workers capped at \$25,000 for each essential worker earning less than \$200,000 per year. The new federal fund would partner with entities engaged in “essential work” that would apply to the Heroes Fund to pass along to employees. No employer would be required to participate but would be “strongly encouraged to” according to Schumer who added that the fund would be widely advertised. Federal workers would also be covered. And Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., said she’d like an “Essential Workers Bill of Rights” in the next relief package. Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Calif., leads the House version of the bill. ○ Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman, D-N.J., along with Reps. Mark Pocan, D-Wis., and Salud Carbajal, D-Calif., penned a letter to House leadership with 150 cosigners calling for “hazard duty pay” for federal frontline workers and increased protections for federal frontline workers like meat and other food safety inspectors. ○ Republicans are taking a different approach that would suspend payroll taxes for essential workers earning less than \$50,000 per year until the end of the pandemic and suspend both payroll taxes and income taxes for those earning between \$50,000 and \$100,000. Sen. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, announced a proposal through an op-ed last week. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Se. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, also proposed a hazard pay benefit – on top of regular pay – of up to \$12 an hour for essential workers facing health risks during the coronavirus pandemic. Romney’s proposal would have employers fund one-fourth of the pay bonus and the rest would be financed through a refundable payroll tax credit through the end of July. “Health care professionals, grocery store workers, food processors, and many others—the unsung patriots on the frontline of this pandemic—every day risk their safety for the health and well-being of our country, and they deserve our unwavering support,” Romney said in a statement. ○ The President reiterated during the last week in April his support for a payroll tax cut – something he has long supported – saying it would help both workers and their employers. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Democrats are laying down their markers ahead of the next round of relief talks. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said she wants as much as \$1 trillion in aid for states and local governments. However, Republicans are reluctant to fund states and local governments at that level. Republicans, on the other hand, are now saying they will not agree to any coronavirus stimulus bill that does not include protections for employers from lawsuits in the post-coronavirus world -- called liability protections. A joint statement from Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., and House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., said, “As the nation continues fighting this pandemic and parts of our economy begin to emerge from shutdown, Senate and House Republicans are united in our demand that healthcare workers, small businesses, and other Americans on the front lines of this fight must receive strong protections from frivolous lawsuits.” 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rep. Ann Kuster, D-N.H., released a “Roadmap to Recovery” proposal to offer essential workers and their families \$25,000 in student loan debt forgiveness or “education credits.” 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., and Rep. Jimmy Panetta, D-Calif., are leading an effort to temporarily allow Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to be used in restaurants, with backing from groups including the National Restaurant Association, National Council of Chain Restaurants and Congressional Hunger Center. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● House leaders are closer to a bipartisan agreement on allowing remote hearings but there is still no agreement on whether to allow remote markups and proxy voting on the House floor. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The U.S. Capitol’s closure to the public has been extended through May 16. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As discussions take place on the Hill about the next relief package, several issues are rising to the top: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Employer liability is being discussed. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., is pushing for liability protections for businesses that reopen during the pandemic. However, Democratic leadership has rejected this proposal. ○ An ‘Essential Workers Bill of Rights’ is being championed by Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass. She argues that frontline workers “are risking their lives to keep America running. Congress has a responsibility to protect them 	

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<p>and their families... Essential workers in all fields lack the basic safety equipment and guarantees they need, and many essential workers are low-wage workers who were underpaid with minimal job protections even before this crisis hit. The next relief package needs to put these workers front and center—and include our Essential Workers Bill of Rights."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Whether or not we will see infrastructure included in the next relief bill is still to be determined. On a call with GOP Senators yesterday, Majority Leader McConnell said he will not support infrastructure in a COVID-19 bill. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● House appropriators will hold an in-person subcommittee hearing on May 6 at 10 a.m. on the federal government's response to the coronavirus pandemic. The Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee will hold the hearing in 2359 Rayburn. As of April 29, witnesses have not been announced. While the House is out of session during the week of May 4, hearings can still occur under House rules. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The "Virtual Congress Task Force" held its second meeting on April 28 to discuss a bipartisan way that the House can function amid the pandemic. After the meeting, which included nearly 30 participants and was conducted via videoconferencing technology, House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer sent out a "Dear Colleague" letter where he sounded optimistic about finding a path forward in the coming weeks. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It was announced on April 28 that House Leadership has reversed course and will not bring the Chamber back in to session next week. House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., made the announcement, citing advice from the Capitol physician and a continuing increase in coronavirus cases in the Washington, D.C., area. The Senate will still come back into session on May 4. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sen. Joni Ernst, R-Iowa, had an op-ed published on FoxNews.com on April 24 in which she called for tax relief for essential, front-line workers, including those in the beverage industry. Sen. Ernst is proposing a federal tax suspension for essential workers (as determined by CISA) during the pandemic. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The House passed the Paycheck Protection Program and Healthcare Enhancement Act Thursday evening. President Donald Trump signed the bill into law today. The legislation provides \$484 billion, including \$310 billion for the Small Business Administration's (SBA) Paycheck Protection Program (\$60 billion set aside for smaller lenders), \$60 billion for SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loans and Advance Grants, \$75 billion for hospitals and \$25 billion for testing. Relief for states and localities is not included. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The House voted to establish the House Select Committee on the Coronavirus Crisis chaired by Majority Whip Jim Clyburn, D-SC., on April 23. The committee will provide oversight of the funds appropriated by Congress to address the coronavirus pandemic. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The House is expected to pass later in the day on April 23 the compromise bill to provide additional funds for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program, as well as needed funds for hospitals and COVID-19 testing. The overall package includes \$484 billion in funding. The package is the fourth in a 	

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<p>series of coronavirus relief bills that has passed through Congress in less than two months, totaling \$2.7 trillion in federal funds to fight the pandemic.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a joint statement, the seven leading organizations representing state and local governments at the federal level called on Congress today to “immediately provide robust, flexible relief” to state, territorial and local governments as part an interim relief package for the COVID-19 pandemic. See the Press Release. The groups were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The National Governors Association, Council of State Governments ○ National Conference of State Legislatures ○ National Association of Counties ○ National League of Cities ○ U.S. Conference of Mayors ○ International City/County Management Association • The National Governors Association sent a letter today to Leaders on Capitol Hill seeking support in the stimulus #4 package. The letter touches on state stabilization, an increase in Federal Medical Assistance Percentages, PPEs and Testing, Unemployment Insurance, Education for Students and Workforce, Small Business, Cost Sharing, the National Guard and Infrastructure. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The full text of the compromise bill passed by the Senate on April 21 can be found here, and a section by section document here. An in-person vote in the House is scheduled for the morning of April 23. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A bipartisan group of House members including House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif.; House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md.; and Reps. Jim McGovern, D-Mass.; Tom Cole, R-Okla.; Zoe Lofgren, D-Calif.; and Rodney Davis, R-Ill. — are considering several options to allow the House to function during the pandemic. They will review remote voting by proxy and reopening the House. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Senate passed a compromise bill on April 21 to provide additional funds for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program as well as needed funds for hospitals and COVID-19 testing. The overall compromise includes \$484 billion as follows: \$321 billion for PPP; \$50 billion for EIDL; \$10 billion for EIDL Advance grants; \$2.1 billion for Small Business Administration (SBA) administrative expenses; \$75 billion for hospitals; and \$25 billion for testing (research, development and deployment). It also clarifies agriculture enterprises are eligible for PPP. The bill makes no changes to the Coronavirus Relief Fund for state and local governments, so that will be an ongoing issue for Phase 4 of the Stimulus. The House is expected to consider the bill on April 23. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus, co-chaired by Representatives Josh Gottheimer, D-N.J., and Tom Reed, R-N.Y., released a “Reopening and Recovery ‘Back to Work’ Checklist” on April 20 that focuses on public health benchmarks and economic recovery priorities. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While public statements from Congressional Republicans and Democrats indicate they are close to a deal on additional funds for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), we want to emphasize that talks are still ongoing. The package being 	

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<p>discussed includes \$300 billion to replenish PPP coffers, \$50 billion in Economic Injury Disaster loans, \$25 billion for testing and an additional \$75 billion for hospitals. However, there are still several issues that need to be worked out. Once a final deal is struck, a vote in the Senate could come early this week, followed by a House vote slated for Wednesday, April 22.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The White House is in talks with Congressional Democrats on a compromise to refill the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). According to reports from the Hill, there is bipartisan agreement that the PPP needs to be refilled however, Republicans are now aiming for more than the originally sought \$251 billion. Democrats are looking for \$75 billion for hospitals, along with additional dollars for community banks and a refresh of the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL). • The small business rescue fund set up by Congress exhausted its \$350 billion funding capacity on the morning of April 16. Pressure is building for Congress to act this week on legislation to infuse another \$251 billion into the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) to keep up with staggering demand by small businesses across the country. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin has been meeting with Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D- Calif., and Senator Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., but no breakthrough has been announced. Even if an agreement is reached, it is unclear how soon Congress could pass it with most lawmakers at home and a unanimous agreement in both the House and Senate required. Congressman Thomas Massie, R-Ky., is expected to force a roll call vote and Senators Rand Paul, R-Ky., and Mike Lee, R-Utah., who were not in Washington when the CARES Act was passed (Sen. Paul was infected with COVID-19, while Sen. Lee was quarantined out of caution), are also wild cards in the Senate. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On April 16, Rules Committee Chairman James P. McGovern, D-Mass., released his recommendation for rules changes that would temporarily implement remote voting for the House during the coronavirus pandemic. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On April 14, U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., announced that the Senate will not be back in session before May 4. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On April 13, House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., announced that, absent an emergency, the House will not be back in session before May 4. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congress is at an impasse over the additional \$250 billion in small business aid. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., announced that they have no intentions to back off their goal to include an additional \$250 billion for state and local governments to the \$250 billion for Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) funding for which Senate Republicans are pushing. Senate Republicans insist that the small business funding is the only measure that can pass unanimously and it's the only money that is needed immediately given that the coffers for other programs are not yet empty. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On April 11, the National Governors Association (NGA) called on Congress for an additional \$500 billion to “meet the states’ budgetary shortfalls that have resulted from this unprecedented public health crisis.” Unlike the federal government, states cannot run deficits and must cut budgets when revenue falls short. The CARES Act gives \$150 billion to states, although there are restrictions on how the money can be used — it is meant to assist in areas including 	

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<p>housing, education and access to “healthy” food. However, governors say it is not nearly enough. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., called the \$150 billion “a down payment.”</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On April 10, Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., co-chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, introduced legislation aimed at preventing mass layoffs by creating "a streamlined program to provide a three-month federal guarantee for 100% of worker salaries of up to \$100,000 to ensure employers of all sizes keep workers on the payroll and continue to provide employer-sponsored benefits.” 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> House Financial Services Democrats proposed a federal reinsurance program to insure small businesses from the effects of pandemics. The proposal would be triggered when industry losses exceed a \$250 million threshold with a \$500 billion cap on aggregate losses for insurers and the government. The proposal is part of continued debate over whether Congress will pass legislation addressing business interruption insurance in the wake of COVID-19. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On April 9, Senate Democrats voted against the approval of \$250 billion in new funding for small businesses that is urgently needed for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). The bill was blocked by Sen. Chris Van Hollen, D-Md. Sen. Van Hollen presented the Democrats' plan to spend an additional \$250 billion on hospitals and local governments that they want coupled with the small business aid. This was blocked by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On April 8, Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., released a joint statement in response to the Administration’s request for another \$250 billion to shore up the Small Business Administration’s Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). In it, they expressed their desire to use those funds for businesses and communities that have been unable to access the current PPP funds, such as farmers, minority-owned businesses, non-profits, etc.), as well as provide additional funding for healthcare providers, state and local governments and a 15% increase to the maximum SNAP. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On April 7, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., announced that the Senate could move as early as Thursday, April 9, to approve approximately \$250 billion dollars in new relief to small businesses. Leader McConnell is working with Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., to deliver more money to the Paycheck Protection Program, a popular \$350 billion program for businesses to cover payroll and expenses during the coronavirus pandemic. Small Business Chairman Marco Rubio, R-Fla., estimated the program needs \$200-\$250 billion and McConnell said he intends to pass new relief as soon as April 9 without a roll call vote. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On April 6 House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-CA., hosted a call with the Democratic Caucus to discuss the next spending package, focused on expanding the funding provided for in the CARES Act. Reportedly estimated to cost more than \$1 trillion, the legislation would include additional unemployment and small business assistance. It is the Speaker’s intention to draft legislation and bring it to the House floor this month (April). President Trump is reportedly supportive of efforts to expand small business relief and direct relief payments. Congressional Republicans also are in favor of providing increased funding to programs established by the CARES Act, and are exploring if additional corporate support is necessary. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On March 11, Democrats in the House and Senate introduced the “Resilient Elections During Quarantines and Natural Disasters Act of 2020.” If passed, the bill would require states to implement absentee voting during emergencies for any reason, including the current national emergency. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On April 1, House Democrats announced their intention to use the fourth relief bill as an opportunity to incorporate components of their “Moving Forward” infrastructure framework, which includes clean water provisions; expanding broadband access and infrastructure investments such as repairing bridges; fixing bottlenecks on roads; and improving transit. Read more here. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., held a press conference on March 30 to outline Phase 4 stimulus package priorities: state aid, worker safety protections, free treatment for COVID-19 and addressing supply chain shortages. Additionally, Democrats are considering an infrastructure component. However, Senate Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., is pushing back on the idea of including infrastructure as it is not germane to COVID-19. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The U.S. House and Senate stands in recess until April 20. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On March 27, the House passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act via voice vote and it was subsequently signed by President Trump. It is the largest rescue package in U.S. history. Provisions important to the industry include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Vehicle Weights</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language is included that clarifies that states can issue special permits for overweight vehicles and loads to allow for the free flow of critical relief supplies during the current coronavirus epidemic for the duration of the fiscal year. Feds are now on record supporting states to issue waivers, but states still need to grant. <u>Direct Aid to Americans</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$1,200/per person for individual filers making up to \$75,000 AGI. Those making up to \$99,000 AGI will receive reduced amounts. Aid is completely phased out at \$99,000 AGI. 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ \$2,400 for joint filers making up to \$150,000 AGI. Those with AGI up to \$198,000 AGI will receive reduced amounts. Aid is completely phased out at \$198,000 AGI. ○ Filers will receive \$500 for each child. <p><u>SNAP</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Funding increased by \$15.5 billion and work requirements are waived. ○ No policy changes were included (i.e., funds used to buy household cleaning supplies or hot prepared foods). <p><u>Worker Retention</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An employee retention tax credit on wages up to \$10,000 per employee per quarter kept on an employer’s payroll through the end of 2020. Companies eligible for the tax credit must have fully or partially suspended operations due to a government order and suffered a significant decline in revenues. ○ Allow companies to defer the 6.2 percent Social Security tax on all wages up to \$137,700 for the rest of the year, though they'd have to pay it back in equal installments in 2021 and 2022. <p><u>Small Business Loans</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Treasury Department updated its FAQ to answer questions about borrowers and businesses with multiple locations, as well as on affiliation rules. ○ The SBA is authorized to provide loans through its existing 7(a) program in amounts equal to two and a half months of payroll, with a maximum of \$10 million. If the borrower uses the loan to cover payroll, interest on debt, rent or utilities, the loans would be forgiven. ○ Previous drafts of the Act capped eligibility at businesses with 500 employees, but the latest version would broaden that to many of your customers (i.e., hotels, restaurants, bars, cafeterias, etc.) with up to 500 employees per location. <p><u>Unemployment Insurance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Act extends regular unemployment benefits to last an additional 13 weeks. In most states, laid-off workers can get a maximum of 26 weeks of benefits. ○ The Act would also add four months of \$600 weekly payments on top of the usual weekly unemployment checks. <p><u>Childcare</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Act provides \$3.5B in Child Care and Development Block Grants for child care assistance to “health care sector employees, emergency responders, sanitation workers, and other workers deemed essential during the response to coronavirus by public officials, without regard to the income eligibility requirement...” 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As of March 24, three Members of Congress – Rep. Diaz-Balart, R-Fla., Rep. Ben McAdams, D-Utah, and Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky. – have tested positive for COVID-19 and are self-quarantining. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The U.S. Capitol Building, House and Senate Office Buildings are limited to Members of Congress, staff and those with “official business only.” 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The House of Representatives is not expected to return to the U.S. Capitol for legislative business until they are in a position to vote on the third piece of legislation related to the COVID-19 crisis, which is currently before the Senate.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The GOP run-off election in Alabama between Jeff Sessions and Tommy Tuberville has been postponed until July 14.	