



Congressional Update

Work in Congress on Hold Until After November Election

Congress has postponed most work until after the November election. A continuing resolution has been passed to keep the government operating at current levels through December 11 after the new fiscal year starts October 1.

Congress also failed to take action on a new COVID-19 relief package. Senate Republicans proposed a \$300 billion package, while Democrats have supported significantly larger funding, based on the \$3 trillion HEROES Act passed by the House in May. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi subsequently lowered the Democrat's request to \$2.2 trillion, but negotiations have largely stalled. Meanwhile, President Trump urged Republicans to "go for the much higher numbers." Some Members of Congress have pushed for compromise, with a bipartisan group of moderates proposing a \$1.5 trillion package. Financial assistance for cities and states appears to be a major area of disagreement between Democrats and Republicans.

Recognizing growing pressure for compromise, the Cities Initiative teamed with the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative on a recent letter to Congressional leaders urging swift action on a COVID relief package with financial assistance to cities. Reflecting the voices of 150 mayors from across the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins, the key message was that Congress should "set aside partisan political considerations and help our cities maintain essential public services, keep workers on the job, and continue investments in roads, water systems and other critical infrastructure." Prospects for a new COVID package remain unclear and Congress likely will revisit the issue after the November election.

Congress is also finalizing legislation that authorizes water resources projects and policies related to water infrastructure. Among other provisions, both the House and Senate versions of the legislation authorize the Army Corps of Engineers' Brandon Road project that will deploy a suite of control actions to prevent Asian carp from moving into Lake Michigan from the Illinois River. This is a critically important project to safeguard the Great Lakes from Asian carp. The legislation lowers the non-federal cost share for the project. The Cities Initiative recently joined other Great Lakes organizations in a letter to Congressional leaders conveying support for key priorities for the Great Lakes in the legislation, which is expected to be finalized and passed by Congress in its lame duck session following the election.