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As you know, this past week the Senate version of the bill was blocked from coming to the floor, as Democrats were frustrated by being blocked from offering a policy rider related to family planning, as well as the bill's low funding allocation (just 1% above current funding levels, instead of the 4.5% overall increase for domestic programming that was included in the budget agreement) – with \$5 billion taken from Labor-HHS and transferred to the Homeland Security appropriations for additional border security funding.

To learn more about the chances for passage of the Labor-HHS bill this year, we met this morning with the Chairman of the Labor-HHS Appropriations Subcommittee, Roy Blunt (R-MO), who was surprisingly upbeat about the overall prospects for Labor-HHS, as he believes that if he can get his bill to Conference with the House, he will be able to work out differences with House Labor-HHS Chair Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) and move a bill to enactment before Thanksgiving.

Blunt expressed his unhappiness that his Senate Labor-HHS bill received a low funding allocation and hopes it will receive an additional \$3-4 billion in Conference to better breach the funding gap with the House bill. We asked him whether he thought the Defense bill would move through the Senate without the Labor-HHS bill, as the two bills were tied together last year, helping the Labor-HHS bill to move to enactment, unlike many other appropriations bills that were unable to be completed before the government shutdown. Blunt did not think that the Defense bill would move as a standalone measure, which is good news, as could likely be the train once again to which other bills are attached.

However, we also spoke with key figures in the House Democratic leadership who were more somber about the prospects of the FY 20 Labor-HHS bill and were highly critical that the Senate took \$5 billion out of the Labor-HHS to pay for the President's border wall. At this juncture, they believe the most likely outcome will be a yearlong Continuing Resolution, as the bulk of the funding gains for Labor-HHS were incorporated this past year and a Continuing Resolution would fund these programs at the same level for another year and also prevent additional border security funding to be used for a border wall.

Chairman Blunt saw the situation a bit differently. While he did not seem interested in cutting the additional border security funding, he did feel that the border activities for which it would be used could be negotiated, as had been done in prior years.

As a result, there may be room for maneuvering through an exceptionally complicated appropriations season this year – though the exact path forward is unclear at the moment. We will be spending the day with Rosa DeLauro on Monday and will update you with her perspective next week.

Scott B. Sanders, Executive Director, NASWA