Congressional Outlook

Week of February 17th

It's a relatively slow week in Washington - the House and Senate are in recess until next Tuesday; yesterday was a federal holiday (Happy President's Day!), and today the federal government is closed due to snow and ice. The Administration is hosting a three-day "Summit on Countering Violent Extremism." The summit will focus on: domestic response at the national level to violent extremist groups; local community response, including state and local law enforcement; and how nations can work together to combat extremist groups. Summit attendees will include foreign ministers and representatives from the United Nations and the European Union.

When lawmakers return next week, their most pressing issue will be how to avert a partial shutdown of the Department of Homeland Security. The department's funding expires February 27, giving leaders five days to break the impasse prompted by House Republicans attaching policy riders that would bar spending to implement President Barack Obama’s actions deferring the deportation of millions of undocumented immigrants.

Week in Review

Congress Approves Keystone

Last Wednesday, the House passed S.1, the measure to approve the Keystone XL pipeline with a 270-150 vote. The President has threatened to veto the measure, and both the House and Senate votes were short of the two-thirds needed to override a veto. It is unclear when the bill will
be sent to the President.

**Administration Creates Center to Counter Cyber Threats**

Last Tuesday, the White House announced the creation of the [Cyber Threat Intelligence Integration Center](#). The Center is designed to better coordinate digital intelligence about potential cyber threats among various federal agencies, such as the FBI and National Security Agency.

**FAA's Early Release of Commercial Drone Use Regulations**

On Sunday, February 15, the FAA released its long-awaited proposed regulation on commercial drone use. The FAA had planned to issue the regulation later this month, but some documents were posted online accidentally, so went ahead and made the announcement on Sunday. The proposed rulemaking would apply to drones less than 55 lbs, and requires the drone operator to be at least 17 years old, pass an aeronautical knowledge test and obtain an FAA operator certificate. To maintain certification, the operator would have to pass the FAA knowledge test every 24 months. The operator would not need any further private pilot certifications (i.e., a private pilot license or medical rating). The proposed rule would also mandate keeping the drone in sight while in operating it, no night flights, and a flight ceiling of 500 feet and 100 mph. Recreational drone use would not be covered under this proposal. The proposed rule also includes the possibility of an additional, more flexible framework for "micro" drones weighing less than 4.4 pounds. There will be a 60-day public comment period starting with the proposal's publication in the Federal Register, but most observers expect that no final rule will be issued before 2017. You can view the fact sheet [here](#).

**Congressional Schedule**

There are no hearings scheduled this week.