Congressional Outlook

Week of January 5

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!

The 114th Congress will convene tomorrow, January 6th, with Republicans taking charge of the Senate (54 Republicans, 44 Democrats and 2 independents caucusing with the Democrats), and running the House with an expanded majority (246 Republicans, 188 Democrats).

The House will vote tomorrow on the formal re-election of John Boehner (R-OH) as speaker and other opening session ceremonies. Though no formal schedule has been released, it is expected that the first legislation to reach the House floor this week are bills to approve the Keystone XL pipeline and to modify the Affordable Care Act (ACA). The ACA bill would change the definition of full-time employment to 40 hours a week from 30 in the current law. An earlier version, H.R. 2575 in the 113th Congress, was passed in April with 18 Democrats among those voting for it.

The Senate's week will be heavy on ceremony, with no votes scheduled. The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee has scheduled a hearing Wednesday and a markup Thursday on a draft bill to approve the Keystone XL pipeline. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) has said that the Keystone vote will be the first vote on the Senate floor next week.

Week in Review

Obama's Plans to Legislate: Regulate
The Obama Administration is planning on another active year of executive action, releasing new rules and enforcing others for the first time - setting tougher standards on everything from air pollution to overtime pay to net neutrality, food safety, commercial drones, a college ratings plan and a crackdown on for-profit colleges that don't prepare their students for well-paying jobs. The rules and regulations will set up more confrontation with a newly unified Republican Congress, which will use all of the tools at its disposal to try to stop individual policies. For more detail on expected rules and regulations, click here.

### Senator to Introduce $1 Trillion Infrastructure Bill

Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) announced last weekend his plans to introduce a bill authorizing a $1 trillion, multi-year program to rebuild roads and bridges. "There are a number of Republicans who understand that it is vitally important that we rebuild our crumbling infrastructure," the incoming Budget Committee ranking member said in a statement over the weekend. Sanders' office did not release further details about the legislation or how it would be funded, but infrastructure could become a key talking point for the Vermont lawmaker as he considers a possible 2016 presidential run.

### Shuster Says No Gas Tax Hike or User Fees to Pay for Transportation Reauthorization

Congressman Bill Shuster (R-PA), Chairman of the House Transportation Committee said passing a bill to pay for America's aging roads and bridges will be a top priority in 2015. However, he ruled out using a gas tax hike or motorist user fees. Shuster has previously said a fee based on vehicle miles traveled should be considered, rather than increasing the gas tax. Yet, with the current GOP-controlled Congress, Shuster acknowledges that both proposals are unworkable. Instead, Chairman Shuster said a highway bill may be paid by repatriating offshore corporate taxes or from oil exploration and production off shore and on federal lands.

### Coming Soon: FEMA's SAFER and Fire Protection and Safety Grant Opportunities

FEMA has announced the dates it will open solicitations for its Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) and Fire Protection and Safety (FP&S) Grants. SAFER will open February 9th, with a deadline of March 6th, and FP&S will open March 16th, with a deadline of April 17th.

To help you prepare, see the last round's funding opportunity announcements below:
- 2014 Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Funding Opportunity Announcement
- 2014 Fire Prevention and Safety Funding Opportunity Announcement

### Senate Democrats to Offer Amendments to Keystone Pipeline Bill

As Democrats in the Senate step into their new role as minority party in the Senate, Senators Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) plan to organize Democrats to offer five amendments to the bill to approve the Keystone XL Pipeline. The amendments include text that has been offered by Senators Ed Markey (D-MA), Ron Wyden (D-OR), and Bernie Sanders (I-VT), and would:
- Prohibit the export of oil transported through the Keystone XL Pipeline
• Require that iron, steel, and manufactured goods used in the construction, connection, operation, and maintenance of the pipeline be produced domestically
• Require that for every job created by the pipeline, at least one job is created through clean energy investments, including a home solar unit rebate program
• Increase funding to the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program and give priority to seniors and veterans
• Prohibit states from invoking eminent domain on behalf of a foreign corporation (The legality of the pipeline’s route through Nebraska is being challenged in the Nebraska Supreme Court on the grounds of an eminent domain case.)
• Raise royalty rates for offshore and onshore drilling and mining on federal lands

The amendments will likely be brought up on Thursday during the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee’s markup of the bill. Read more...

**Congressional Schedule**

**Wednesday, January 7**

• Senate Energy and Natural Resources Full Committee hearing to examine an original bill to approve the Keystone XL pipeline.

**Thursday, January 8**

• Senate Energy and Natural Resources Full Committee business meeting on Keystone XL legislation.