



October 1, 2015

Today is the first day of the new federal fiscal year. Since Congress has been unable to pass any of the FY'16 federal agency appropriations bills, earlier this week they passed a short-term Continuing Resolution (CR) which funds the government at current levels until December 11, 2015, thereby avoiding a government shutdown. The sudden and surprising resignation of House Speaker John Boehner helped to resolve the impasse over efforts to defund Planned Parenthood that had been holding up consideration of a CR and putting the government on the brink of a shutdown. However, the CR only postpones (until right before the holidays) the hard decisions that still must be made in order to reach a broad budget agreement that would raise the budget caps set under the Budget Control Act (BCA). The BCA mandates across-the-board sequestration cuts when federal spending exceeds the budget caps.

On October 8, the House will hold an election for a new Speaker and House Republicans will hold elections for other key leadership spots. At this time, it appears that current House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) is expected to be elected as House Speaker.

This week, Congress also passed a six-month extension of Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) programs, including funding for the Airport Improvement Program (AIP). The current FAA authorization expired on September 30. House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bill Shuster (R-PA) and Ranking Democrat, Peter DeFazio (D-OR), suggested this will be the only short-term extension necessary. The committee continues to work on a bill to enact a major overhaul of the organization and structure of the Air Traffic Control (ATC) system. However, the ATC reorganization remains very controversial. There were 23 temporary extensions of FAA's authority before the last reauthorization bill was passed in 2012.

In the meantime, the House has yet to introduce its version of a multi-year surface transportation bill. The current short-term extension of MAP-21 expires on October 29 and it appears likely that at least one additional extension will be required – potentially through the end of the calendar year.

The bipartisan leadership of the House T&I Committee has introduced a stand-alone PTC extension bill, H.R. 3651, the Positive Train Control Enforcement and Implementation Act of 2015. The bill provides a three-year extension of the current implementation deadline of December 31, 2015. In addition, the US DOT Secretary would have the discretion to grant an additional two years based on good faith efforts and circumstances that may be beyond a railroad's control. Here is a [link](#) to the text of the bill. The Senate-passed surface transportation authorization bill, the DRIVE Act, would extend the PTC deadline to December 2018.

Congress will be on recess the week of October 12.