

WSP Washington Update – November 9, 2020 – Interim Update

On Saturday, four days after Election Day, former Vice President Joe Biden was declared the President-elect. Biden and US Senator Kamala Harris will be sworn into office on January 20.

President-elect Biden is expected to govern very differently than President Trump particularly as it relates to healthcare, trade, foreign policy, climate and environmental issues, tax policy, and immigration. But first, the new Administration will need to address the growing COVID-19 pandemic which will hopefully include providing emergency funding for critical transportation and infrastructure-related programs and agencies.

President-elect Biden has also indicated that infrastructure will be one of his top priorities. During the campaign, he expressed support for close to \$2 trillion in federal funding for a wide range of critical infrastructure programs – one of the first being passage of a multi-year reauthorization of the FAST Act surface transportation bill – likely based on the House-passed HR 2 – “Moving America Forward/Invest Act” bill. Biden’s other infrastructure priorities include: clean energy, green technology (including autonomous vehicles), transit and rail, smart cities, school modernization, broadband, and climate change. Here is a [link](#) to the Biden campaign’s infrastructure policy paper.

The Biden campaign is expected to name the leaders of its federal agency transition teams shortly. Speculation has already begun about potential Cabinet nominees and White House staff.

Final determination of control of the US Senate will now not occur until the January 5 runoff elections for both Senate seats in Georgia. Both seats are currently held by incumbent Republicans. If both were to lose their runoffs, Democrats would end up with a net increase of three seats, which coupled with Vice President-elect Harris’ ability to break any tied votes, would give them control of the upper body. On November 3, Democrats lost one incumbent (Doug Jones in Alabama), but picked up two Republican-held seats in Colorado and Arizona. Seats in Alaska and North Carolina have not yet been called, but the Republican incumbents are expected to ultimately prevail.

While several seats around the country are still too close to call, Democrats are expected to retain their majority in the US House in the new 117th Congress, but by a slimmer margin than they currently have - as opposed to the 15+ seat net gain that some had predicted.

Therefore, we don’t expect to see significant changes in House or Senate committee leadership except for the usual shuffle because of retirements or term limits.

Congress will return to session on November 16 to hold a post-election Lame Duck session. The top two priorities will be to pass a COVID-19 emergency relief bill and to deal with the 12 pending federal agency FY’21 appropriations bills. The current Continuing Resolution (CR) which is temporarily funding the government expires on December 11. It is likely that Congress will opt to simply pass another short-term CR extending into the new Congress.