

WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff Washington Update - September 29, 2016 - Interim Update

Despite warnings earlier this week of a potential government shutdown, Congress was able to negotiate compromises on several contentious issues and pass a ten-week Continuing Resolution (CR) in advance of the October 1 start of fiscal year 2017. The CR extends through December 9 and funds all federal government agencies at current FY'16 levels.

One of the main sticking points – funding for the Flint water crisis - was temporarily resolved when House leaders agreed to include funding in its version of the pending Water Resources authorization bill. With that issue resolved, Senate Democrats agreed to support the CR and the Senate passed it yesterday afternoon. The House followed suit last night. The President is expected to sign the CR today or tomorrow.

The House and Senate then both adjourned until after the November 8 elections. On November 15, Congress is scheduled to return to work in a "Lame Duck" session. While there are a number of pressing issues that Congress needs to work on then, the general sense is that little may be accomplished other than passing another CR into 2017 or possibly passing an omnibus FY'17 appropriations bill.

Before leaving town, the House also passed its version of the Corps of Engineers' Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). The Senate previously passed its version of the bill, but the bills won't be reconciled and finalized until after the election in the Lame Duck session. The two bills have significant differences, although now both bills include funding for the Flint water crisis. However, the House bill authorizes less Flint funding than the Senate bill. The House bill almost didn't pass because of Democrats' objection to a last minute change to the bill which eliminated language the engineering industry strongly supports regarding the mandatory drawdown of funding in the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund.