



FEW Washington Legislative Update September 1 - 15, 2022

In Congress:

Both Houses of Congress departed Washington on September 15 without taking any action on a continuing resolution (CR) to keep the government running when its funding runs out on September 30.

The delay stems from Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer's decision to include West Virginia Democrat Joe Manchin's permitting reform proposal to a continuing resolution to keep the government open until mid-December. The proposal has yet to be released, but Republicans are already indicating their opposition and are instead backing an alternative proposed by West Virginia Republican Shelley Moore Capito.

Manchin told reporters he needs at least 20 Senate Republicans to back his plan, which is also coming under fire from Democrats. At least 70 House Democrats have come out in opposition to the plan saying it would result in more gas and oil drilling, which they oppose. Under current circumstances, Schumer, Democrat of New York, doesn't have the 60 votes necessary to pass a CR that includes Manchin's proposal. And, even if it were to clear the Senate, it appears the House lacks the necessary 218 votes for passage.

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, Democrat of Maryland, warned House members on the floor September 15 that unless they come together on an agreement soon, they will remain in session through October 1, a Saturday, to complete the CR.

"There's some discussion about what are we going to do the last week in September," Hoyer told House lawmakers. "And I've told my members and would also make clear to

all of our members, including [Republicans], that they ought to be making sure the last three days of [September] weekdays and that Saturday, they ought to keep clear so that if in fact we need to work during [that] period of time, and my expectation is that we are going to have to, that they not be canceling events that they scheduled. So being on notice, I think, would be fair to them and fair to anybody we're scheduling with."

Other provisions that could end up attached to the CR are additional funds for Ukraine, FDA fees legislation, and possibly some disaster aid relief.

Sourced ([Thomson Reuters](#))

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:

State Department Releases its Roadmap for Increasing Diversity and Equity

The nation's top diplomat doubled down Tuesday on his commitment to increase diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in his workforce as his department released a roadmap of how they're going to achieve that.

The State Department has had varied progress on diversity over the years, as the Government Accountability Office said in an early 2020 report. Then more recently, GAO reported the department has taken actions to improve DEIA in the workforce, although "gaps remain in measurement and accountability."

"During my confirmation hearing, I said that I would judge the success of my tenure, in part, by how well I lead the department to be more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible," said Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a statement on Tuesday, as his department shared its five-year DEIA strategic plan, pursuant to President Biden's June 2021 executive order on increasing DEIA in the federal workforce. "Together, we will make the department a more effective organization, better equipped to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century."

Amb. Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley, State's chief diversity and inclusion officer, along with her team, has "worked diligently with department stakeholders and experts to finalize the [plan] and "establish the department's first-ever demographic baseline report," said the secretary. While testifying before a Senate committee in July, Abercrombie-Winstanley shared numerous initiatives, some of which were already underway, and said this time the department's efforts on DEIA would be different.

Specifically, the five-year strategic plan includes: using data and an evidence-based approach to determine barriers member of the workforce face to equitable career outcomes; making advancement of DEIA a part of the criteria for job performance, career advancement and senior performance pay; targeting underrepresented groups in recruitment efforts; conducting a first-of-its-kind DEIA climate survey across the department; enhancing the reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities and making the culture more disability-inclusive; being more transparent about legal obligations for religious accommodations; and creating a retention unit to look at the root causes of attrition.

Additionally, “as a fundamental part of the retention effort, the retention unit is developing a Workforce Flexibilities Plan under the Future of Work process, which will focus on updates to technology and improved transparent, objective, and fair telework policies,” said a factsheet.

Last month the department announced a new “Colin Powell Leadership Program” to help further the department’s efforts to bring people with diverse backgrounds to State via paid fellowships and internships, both of which could lead to full-time employment.

“Colin Powell understood that diversity ‘is a source of strength, it is a source of our success,’ and exemplified his leadership values — both as a general and as Secretary of State — by putting people first,” an announcement from the department stated.

Also, the department announced in April it was overhauling the hiring process for foreign service officers, which included making the almost 100-year-old writing and language skills test play less of a role. Abercrombie-Winstanley said in July “this [will] level the playing field and allows the department to examine more candidates from a wider variety of backgrounds.”

Sourced From: ([Government Executive](#))

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Tier I

Schedule F

The House on Thursday voted 225-204 to pass legislation barring future presidents from unilaterally stripping federal workers of their civil service protections as former

President Trump tried to do with his abortive establishment of Schedule F. Six Republican members voted in favor of the bill.

In October 2020, Trump signed an executive order establishing Schedule F, a new classification within the federal government's excepted service, and instructed federal agencies to identify and transfer career federal workers in policy-related positions into the new job category, stripping them of their civil service protections and making them effectively at-will employees. But the administration was ultimately unable to implement the edict before Trump left office, and President Biden quickly rescinded the measure. The Preventing a Patronage System Act (H.R. 302), introduced by Rep. Gerry Connolly, D-Va., blocks the president from reimplementing Schedule F, or any other new excepted schedule category of workers, without advanced congressional approval. The text of the bill already passed out of the House as part of the chamber's version of the fiscal 2023 National Defense Authorization Act in July, and companion legislation was introduced in the Senate last month.

The renewed focus on the issue by congressional Democrats comes after reports that conservative activists and ex-Trump administration staffers have plans to immediately revive Schedule F under the next Republican president and have already identified 50,000 employees to threaten with termination. Trump, who is mulling another run at the White House, also explicitly endorsed the idea during a political rally last month.

The bill has the support of dozens of good government organizations and federal employee groups, including the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association, the American Federation of Government Employees, the National Treasury Employees Union, the Senior Executives Association, Professional Managers Association, among others.

During debate on the House floor, Connolly said the bill would preserve both the federal workforce's century-old merit system protections and reassert Congress' authority as the maker of federal personnel policy.

"This bill does not preclude the president requesting to create a new job classification, but it does require [a request to Congress]," he said. "It restores the balance . . . Changing the nature of the civil service is rare and important, and it should require express congressional participation through legislation."

Rep. James Comer, R-Ky., accused Democrats of wanting to entrench "bureaucrats" who are hostile to Republican policies and that the Washington, D.C.-area supports

Connolly's legislation because of the large numbers of federal employees in their district.

"This bureaucracy gets bigger every Congress," he said. "I've noticed that with the exception of one speaker, all of the speakers on the other side of the aisle represent the Washington, D.C., federal bureaucracy workforce, but the majority of Congress, we represent America. Americans want to hold poor performing government employees, the bureaucrats who are paid with our hard-earned tax dollars, accountable."

Eighty-five percent of federal workers live and work outside of the Washington, D.C., region. Rep. Carolyn Maloney, D-N.Y., took exception to Comer's characterization.

"I do not represent the Washington workforce, I represent New York City and the private sector, and I also represent taxpayers—a lot of them," she said. "They want their money to be spent for good government, and they want the people in government to be impartial and dedicated to doing the best job possible without political influence. That's exactly what this bill is about. Schedule F was never about removing employees who are performing poorly, and we removed over 10,000 federal employees last year. This is about protecting employees who are doing a good job from political influence."

Sourced From: ([Government Executive](#))

FEW Washington Legislative Update – September 1-15, 2022 Tier II

Whistleblower Protections

The House voted 221-203 to pass legislation on Thursday bolstering protections for federal employees who blow the whistle on fraud, waste and abuse.

The bill would increase whistleblower protections for federal employees, make sure that whistleblowers have due process and equitable relief and expand whistleblower protections to federal employees not previously covered, among other things. It is one of several bills the House took up this week to improve government transparency and accountability.

"Congress relies on whistleblowers to exercise our constitutional oversight responsibilities, safeguard taxpayer dollars, improve federal programs, and even save lives," Rep. Carolyn Maloney, chairwoman of the House Oversight and Reform Committee, who introduced the bill, said in a press release. "Today's bipartisan passage

of the Whistleblower Protection Improvement Act brings us one step closer to ensuring that any federal employee who steps forward to report wrongdoing is protected from retaliation. I hope the Senate will quickly take up this commonsense bill.”

There is no companion version for the Whistleblower Protection Improvement Act in the Senate to date. However, the bill is included in both the House and Senate versions of the Protecting Our Democracy Act, a massive government bill that came largely in response to issues raised under the Trump administration. The House passed the bill in December 2021 and Rep. Adam Kinzinger, R-Ill., was the only Republican to vote for it. So far, in the Senate, the bill has just been introduced and there are no Republican cosponsors.

“When Americans alert the nation to waste, fraud, and abuse by the federal government, they take immense personal, professional, and emotional risks,” said Rep. Nancy Mace, R-S.C. ranking member of the oversight committee’s panel on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, and co-sponsor of the bill. “The passage of the bipartisan Whistleblower Protection Improvement Act will help ensure these brave citizens who help root out corruption are protected from possible intimidation and retaliation.”

A diverse coalition of over 100 organizations threw their support behind the bill this past summer saying, the legislation, “addresses both the loopholes and due process gaps by providing parity for federal civil service employee whistleblower rights with those enacted by Congress” for most of the private sector whistleblower laws enacted since 2002.

The White House also endorsed the bill in a statement of administration policy released on Tuesday.

However, the bill was not without opposition.

“I appreciate and value whistleblowers’ service and sacrifice to make government better,” Rep. James Comer, R-Ky., ranking member of the House Oversight and Reform Committee, said on the House floor on Tuesday, adding that he opposed this bill because there are already many whistleblower laws on the books and this one goes too far. Democrats should “stop working to further entrench the executive branch bureaucracy,” he said.

Sourced From: ([Government Executive](#))

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Tier III

Without investment, gender equality will take nearly 300 years: UN report

Achieving full gender equality, one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), could take close to 300 years if the current rate of progress continues, according to a report published on Wednesday by UN Women and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA).

The study reveals how gender disparities are worsening in the face of “cascading” global crises – such as the COVID-19 pandemic, violent conflict, and climate change – coupled with the backlash against women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights.

As a result, countries will not meet SDG5 by the 2030 deadline.

“This is a tipping point for women’s rights and gender equality as we approach the half-way mark to 2030,” said Sima Bahous, Executive Director at UN Women.

“It is critical that we rally now to invest in women and girls to reclaim and accelerate progress. The data show undeniable regressions in their lives made worse by the global crises – in incomes, safety, education and health. The longer we take to reverse this trend, the more it will cost us all.”

[The Gender Snapshot 2022 report](#) showcases how cooperation, partnerships and investments are essential to put the world back on track.

Without swift action, legal systems that do not ban violence against women, or protect their rights in marriage and family, may continue to exist for generations to come.

The report warns that at the current rate of progress, it will take up to 286 years to close gaps in legal protection and remove discriminatory laws.

Most vulnerable affected

Furthermore, it will take 140 years for women to achieve equal representation in leadership positions in the workplace, and 40 years for the same to happen in national parliaments.

Meanwhile, to eradicate child marriage by 2030, progress will have to be 17 times faster than in the last decade, with girls from the poorest rural households and in conflict-affected areas expected to suffer the most.

“Cascading global crises are putting the achievement of the SDGs in jeopardy, with the world’s most vulnerable population groups disproportionately impacted, in particular women and girls. Gender equality is a foundation for achieving all SDGs and it should be at the heart of building back better,” said Maria-Francesca Spatolisano, an Assistant Secretary-General at UN DESA.

Extreme poverty rising

The report also highlights a worrisome reversal on poverty reduction, with rising prices set to exacerbate the situation.

By the end of the year, roughly 383 million women and girls will live in extreme poverty, compared to 368 million men and boys. Many more will have insufficient income to meet basic needs such as food, clothing, and adequate shelter in most parts of the world.

If current trends continue, more women and girls in sub-Saharan Africa will live in extreme poverty by 2030 than today, according to the report.

The invasion of Ukraine in February, and the ongoing war there, are further worsening food insecurity and hunger, especially among women and children. The war has led to limited supplies of wheat, fertilizer and fuel, while propelling inflation.

Many street food vendors lost their only source of income when COVID-19 lockdowns shuttered towns and cities in Thailand.

The power of education

Other daunting facts from the report reveal that globally, women lost roughly \$800 billion in income due to the pandemic. Despite a rebound, women’s participation in the job market is projected to decrease this year to 50.8 per cent, compared to 51.8 per cent in 2021.

The report has been released ahead of the Transforming Education Summit, which will be convened on the margins of the UN General Assembly later this month.

Although not enough by itself, achieving universal girls' education would help to boost gender equality.

Each additional year of schooling can increase a girl's future earnings by up to 20 per cent, according to the report, with further impacts on poverty reduction, better maternal health, lower child mortality, greater HIV prevention and reduced violence against women.

Sourced From: [\(UN News\)](#)

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