



*Week of 2-27-17
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Congressional Overview

Congress returned from the President Day's Recess to listen to President Trump's Address, and the Senate continued with the Cabinet confirmation process.

President Trump Delivers His First Address to Congress

President Trump delivered his first address to Congress on Tuesday. Read on for a summary of his various positions of note to FCA members. [Click here](#) to read the full text of Trump's speech.

Immigration – President Trump endorsed an overhaul of the legal immigration system that he said would protect American workers while attracting international talent. He also pledged increased enforcement at the borders to keep communities safe from “dangerous criminal immigrants.”

Healthcare – President Trump voiced support Tuesday night for aspects of the House GOP plan to replace the 2010 healthcare law, such as the use of tax credits and the expansion of health savings accounts to help Americans purchase insurance. Both are foundations of House Speaker Paul Ryan's (R-WI) plan.

Infrastructure – President Trump called for public and private financing of a trillion-dollar infrastructure agenda, acknowledging for the first time that the federal government would invest in such a program.

Foreign Policy – President Trump declared his support for NATO and called for U.S. engagement with the world. However, he also stressed that America's partners must shoulder more of the financial and military burden of their defenses.

Education – President Trump asked Congress to pass and fund a school choice bill that would help low-income students attend private and religious schools, a proposal that may boost pending legislation.

FDA – President Trump stated that the slow and burdensome approval process at the FDA keeps too many advances from reaching those in need and restraints need to be slashed, not only at the FDA but across the federal government.

Another Short-Term Continuing Resolution (CR) Might Be Needed

Given a Senate calendar crowded by nominations and other priorities, moving the new defense package by April 28, when the current CR expires, will be difficult. There is growing talk that at least another short-term CR may be needed, and it might even last for the five months remaining in the fiscal year.

House Committee Meets with Airport Executives in Advance of FAA Reauthorization Bill

As Congress prepares to move another Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reauthorization bill this year, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee heard from airport executives from around the country on Wednesday. Republican committee members focused on the air-traffic-control system, which Chairman Bill Shuster (R-PA) would like to see spun off from government control.

Trump Pledges to Spend \$1 Trillion on U.S. Infrastructure

President Trump has pledged to spend \$1 trillion on U.S. infrastructure, and his Administration wants to tap private sector funds for projects. Per Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao, "There's a number of ways to fund critical upgrades and no consensus across the political spectrum, so there needs to be national agreement on getting a plan approved."

During his presidential campaign, President Trump pledged to spend \$1 trillion over 10 years rebuilding U.S. roads, bridges, airports, schools and other infrastructure, but he has not said how his plan would be funded, what types of projects will be covered or other details. Secretary Chao said the administration is open to ideas, and that President Trump looks forward to hearing from the governors on their ideas. She noted that tolls are often unpopular with the public, so innovative ways to fund and finance infrastructure work must be considered.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection Issues Notice Seeking Bids for Construction of Wall Along Mexican Border

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection issued a notice on Feb. 24 that starts the process of seeking bids for contracts to complete a wall along the southern border with Mexico. The agency said construction contracts may be issued as early as mid April. The decision to begin the process of seeking bids for the border wall came before the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) provided lawmakers with any estimates of costs or revealed plans for how it will ask for additional money in FY 17 or fiscal FY 18.

A draft DHS report estimated the costs of a wall and fencing along the southern border could reach as much as \$21.6 billion over several years. House Speaker Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) have said they intend to seek \$12 to \$15 billion in a supplemental spending request to begin initial construction. To date, the United States has constructed about 700 miles of wall or vehicle obstructions along the approximately 2,000-mile border.

Trump Administration Pushing Forward with Plan to Repeal Affordable Care Act

President Trump is pushing forward on an aggressive two to three week goal for his own administration's plan to replace the healthcare law, even as Republican lawmakers and governors say they are still working to find common ground on basic policy issues. The push from President Trump comes as House Republicans, who are further along than the Senate on repealing and replacing the healthcare law, are still grappling with central questions, such as how generous they can be with the law's subsidies and how much to limit the tax break employers get for providing health insurance to their employees.

Though President Trump has suggested his administration would release its own healthcare plan, congressional leaders have emphasized how closely they are working with Secretary of Health and Human Services Tom Price and other administrators on their own work. Following a Monday meeting with the president, Senate Majority Leader McConnell called the Trump agenda and that of congressional Republicans the "exact same" and predicted the "fever of legislative dysfunction is about to break."

President Trump told insurance executives his plan to overhaul the healthcare system would be "a great plan for the patients, for the people and hopefully for the companies." He shared no details about the proposal but said it will be "a very competitive plan" that reduces healthcare costs and improves access to care "very, very substantially."

"I think people are going to like it a lot," the president said. Participants included top executives from major insurers, including UnitedHealth Group, Aetna, Cigna, Humana, Anthem, Kaiser Permanente and the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association, as well as several smaller plans, including Florida Blue, Independence Blue Cross, and Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina.

Finally, President Trump expressed surprise at how complicated health care is, stating, “I have to tell you, it’s an unbelievably complex subject. Nobody knew that healthcare could be so complicated.” The president also noted that the law's popularity has increased at the same time Republican plans to repeal it have grown more serious. Per President Trump, “People hate it, but now they see that the end is coming, and they're saying, ‘Oh, maybe we love it,’ there's nothing to love. It's a disaster, folks.”

Former Speaker John Boehner Doesn't Believe Repeal/Replace of Affordable Care Act will Happen

Former House Speaker Boehner predicts that a full repeal and replace of the Affordable Care Act is not going to happen, and that Republicans will instead just make some fixes to the health care law. Boehner’s candid but direct comments capture the conundrum that many Republicans find themselves in as they try to eliminate the Affordable Care Act and determine a path forward on an alternative.

Yuanda Representative Pens Article Regarding Aluminum Extruders Council and the Curtain Wall Coalition

A U.S. representative of Chinese curtainwall company Yuanda has wrote to USGNN.com at length, responding to recent statements made by the Aluminum Extruders Council (AEC) and Curtain Wall Coalition (CWC) regarding a tariff scope case on Chinese curtainwall. The AEC and CWC recently praised a decision by the U.S. Commerce Department in the Court of International Trade, which upholds its previous determination that certain aluminum curtainwall products from Yuanda and other Chinese companies are covered by antidumping and countervailing duty orders. Litigation in the case has continued since an initial scope ruling in early 2014.

In a near-2,000-word commentary submitted to USGNN.com titled “[Whose Coalition is it Anyway?](#)” Yuanda Northwest USA sales manager John D’Amario calls the CWC’s efforts, now spearheaded by the AEC, “an all-out, misinforming-of-the-public jihad on Chinese aluminum.”

President Trump’s Energy Reform

On Feb. 24, President Trump stated that his administration is preparing “bold action” to stimulate the growth of the U.S. oil, natural gas and coal industries and will soon reduce regulations targeting fossil fuels. President Trump is expected to overturn regulations designed to limit offshore energy development, curb methane emissions, and implement stricter fuel standards.

EPA Repealing Regulations

This week EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt announced plans to repeal the Waters of the U.S. Rule, the Clean Power Plan and a rule limiting methane emissions.

Shale Companies Enjoying Boom

U.S. shale companies have increased production by an average of 125,000 barrels per day every month since a Sept. 2016 low, compared with an average monthly increase of 93,000 barrels per day during the first shale boom between 2011 and 2015. This suggests that the current U.S. shale upturn is more powerful than the previous shale boom and particularly dangerous for OPEC's plans to balance the global oil market with production cuts.