



*Week of 6-13-16  
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### **Congressional Overview**

Both chambers focused on FY 17 appropriation bills (defense, commerce, justice and state) meanwhile the Zika and Puerto Rico funding bills remain unsettled. Additionally, this week's legislative agenda was impacted by this past weekend's massacre in Orlando that authorities say constituted both a terrorist attack and a hate crime.

### **Senate Committee Approves FY 17 Funding Bill**

Last week, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved a \$162 billion bill to fund the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education on a 29-1 vote. It's the first time in seven years that the often-controversial bill was backed on such a strong bipartisan basis, eliciting a "Wow!" from Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), the committee's top Democrat.

### **Senate Names Conferees to Funding Bill that would Include Zika Funding**

The Senate named conferees to the FY 17 THUD (Transportation and Housing Urban Development) bill including the Senate's \$1.1 billion appropriation for the Zika virus. Anticipating the Zika conference, Labor, Health and Human Services, Education Subcommittee Chair Roy Blunt (R-MO) was optimistic that the final number would be closer to the Senate amount. The House recommended \$622 million in reprogrammed funds.

### **Senate Passes National Defense Authorization Act**

On Tuesday, Senators voted 85-13 to pass the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), a \$602 billion bill that broadly lays out policy and spending guidelines for the Pentagon and the military service branches. The bill still faces several hurdles before it can be signed into law. President Obama has threatened to veto the Senate version over several of its policy provisions, one of which would be a restriction on Guantanamo Bay detainee transfers. The House also passed its version of the NDAA in May, meaning lawmakers will need to merge their competing proposals during a conference committee.

### **Gun Control Debate's Impact on the Legislative Calendar**

Gun control debate has swept the country following Sunday's tragic shooting in Orlando. On Wednesday, Sen. Chris Murphy (D-CT) seized control of the Senate floor for a 15 hour filibuster, preventing the Senate from voting on its Commerce, Justice and Science Appropriations Bill. Sen. Murphy stated that he was "prepared to stand on the Senate floor and talk about the need to prevent gun violence for as long as I can." Sen. Murphy wanted to allow votes on two gun control amendments on the legislation. The Senate will hold votes on those two amendments on Monday. The debate is certainly not over for gun control legislation, further overstuffing an already full legislative agenda that Congress needs to act on during a relatively short remaining legislative calendar.

Fun fact: per the rules of a filibuster, Sen. Murphy was not allowed to sit down or lean on anything, nor could he take any bathroom breaks or leave the room, lest he give up the floor. He also could not eat anything, except for candies from the "candy desk" on the Senate floor, which is typically held by a senator from Pennsylvania, home of large candy manufacturers. The Candy Desk is currently occupied by honorary FCA member Sen. Pat Toomey (R-PA).

### **Senate Committee Passes Controversial Spending Bill**

One of the more controversial spending bills got the committee treatment in both the Senate and House, as both moved forward on spending bills for the EPA and Department of the Interior. The full House Appropriations Committee voted on a \$32 billion bill that rolls back several climate initiatives, including rules limiting emissions from power plants. The Senate, meanwhile, rolled out its bill at a Tuesday subcommittee markup, and then passed the bill by committee vote on Thursday. Democrats have promised to block the bill should Republicans attempt to bring it to the floor, due to it blocking the EPA's Clean Water Rule.

### **Congress Sends Freedom of Information Act to President's Desk**

The House passed the Senate-approved version of legislation to overhaul Freedom of Information Act procedures, sending it to President Obama's desk. Ultimately, the bill will require federal agencies to consider release of government information under a "presumption of openness" as opposed to a presumption the information is secret. The White House has indicated that President Obama will sign the bill into law.

### **Congress Continues Progress on Zika and Mental Health Legislation**

Progress continued this week on two of this year's major health issues: Zika and mental health. Last week, the Senate voted to go to conference and named its conferees who will negotiate with the House on a funding plan to combat the Zika virus. The chambers' responses are quite different: The Senate allocated \$1.1 billion in emergency funding inside an appropriations bill, whereas the House passed a \$622 million standalone that's fully offset (paid for). An agreement before the July 4 recess is imminent.

On Wednesday, the House Energy and Commerce Committee marked up Rep. Tim Murphy (R-PA)'s mental-health legislation, a new version of which recently garnered feedback from members and stakeholders. On the other side of the Capitol, the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee has already passed a bill, and progress is being made in an attempt to bring it before the full Senate. The House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee held a hearing Tuesday on the public-health response to antibiotic resistance. The Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee held a Wednesday hearing titled "America's Insatiable Demand for Drugs: Examining Alternative Approaches."

### **U.S. Ranks Fourth in Energy Security**

On June 7, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce announced that the United States now ranks fourth in energy security out of the 25 biggest energy-consuming countries. The 2016 International Index of Energy Security Risk showed Norway retained its top ranking, while Ukraine remained the least energy secure country. The U.S. improved from number six in the previous year's index, in part because of an increase in oil and natural gas production from shale formations, per the report, which said crude oil production increased by 3.8 million barrels per day from late 2011 to 2015. Per Karen Harbert, president and chief executive of the Chamber's Institute for 21st Century, "in this era of an increasingly extreme 'keep it in the ground' movement, it is important to recognize that the shale revolution has made America almost 25 percent more secure than it was in 1980, reducing our risks across a variety of metrics."