

Legislative Update

February 21, 2025

FROM WASHINGTON, D.C.

Reconciliation

This week, House Republicans received a green light from President Trump to move forward with their single-bill approach to the reconciliation process. The House blueprint includes cost-cutting measures, an increased debt limit, and the passage of the 2017 Trump tax cuts. The President's approval follows Senate Republicans advancing a "skinny" budget resolution that allocates funding for the military, energy, and border protection. Senate Republicans are pursuing a two-step approach—first attempting to secure an early win by passing the "skinny" budget resolution, then later pushing forward the full 2017 tax cuts. Now, with the House in the driver's seat, the Senate will opt for a backup plan approach in case the House plan falls through. The House budget resolution needs to pass out of the Budget Committee before moving to a full floor vote where Republicans hold a razor thin majority. Speaker Johnson is indicating there will be a vote on the resolution in the coming weeks.

Roadway Safety Hearing

On February 12, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Highways and Transit met to assess roadway safety programs in the United States. Witnesses included representatives from county associations, roadway safety planners, and labor organizations. The hearing focused on evaluating the effectiveness of the previous surface authorization bill and identifying necessary improvements for the upcoming authorization bill. Key priorities discussed included funding flexibility, permitting reform, heavy-duty truck weight limits, and enhanced educational and safety outreach efforts for drivers.

FROM AUSTIN

A House Appropriations Committee hearing was held on Wednesday, February 19 on TxDOT's proposed budget. TxDOT's Executive Director, Marc Williams, and Chief Financial Officer, Stephen Steward, testified. Recommendations included \$40.4 billion in all funds, with state highway funds making up the majority of TxDOT funding (\$9.91 billion). TxDOT said recommendations provided \$7.89 billion from Proposition 1 and \$7.50 billion from Proposition 7. Representative Cassandra Garcia Hernandez asked about the End the Streak initiative. Mr. Williams provided additional information on the communication campaign and its investments. Representative Brian Harrison asked about the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) initiative and how it was funded. Mr. Williams and Mr. Steward assured the Representative that no state dollars had been utilized for the program, which is now halted due to the Trump administration.

UPCOMING COMMITTEE HEARINGS

TEXAS SENATE

- Senate Natural Resources Committee will meet on Wednesday, February 26, to adopt committee rules and meet for an organizational hearing.

US SENATE

- The Environment and Public Works Committee will meet on Wednesday, February 26, to conduct a case study review on some of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) projects that have taken place over the past few years.

RECENT COMMITTEE HEARINGS

TEXAS SENATE

- Senate Finance met on Tuesday, February 11, 2025, to consider SB 1, General Appropriations Bill - Article VI - Natural Resources. Legislative Budget Board staff testified on the budget for TCEQ. Recommendations included \$849.3 million in all funds, a \$55.5 million increase, primarily due to various federally funded program increases and offset by decreases due to the removal of one-time costs. The Committee also heard testimony from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. Much of the discussion was related to TCEQ's public input efforts and permit applications.
- Senate Finance met on Wednesday, February 13, 2025, to consider SB 1, General Appropriations Bill - Article VII - Business and Economic Development. This included TxDOT and TxDMV. The summary is discussed above.

US SENATE

- On February 19, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee met to discuss the permitting process in United States and what can be done to help reduce regulatory issues this Congress.

US HOUSE

- On February 12, the House Transportation Subcommittee on Highways and Transit met to evaluate efforts to improve highway safety through policy and program reviews within the Department of Transportation.