



**DATE:** November 20, 2023

**SUBJECT:** October Federal Legislative Update

After a three-week public battle that laid bare the deep divisions within the House Republican caucus, Representative Mike Johnson of Louisiana was elected Speaker on October 25.

The election of Johnson as Speaker signals a potential political shift to the right. A devout evangelical Christian, Johnson is a right-wing conservative and is an outspoken proponent of deep cuts in federal spending. Elected to the House in 2016, the 51-year-old congressman is probably best known outside Louisiana for his support of Donald Trump's efforts to deny the results of the 2020 presidential election. Johnson has held leadership roles in the Republican caucus since 2021 when he was elected as Vice Chairman of the Republican Conference. In the last Congress, he served as an Assistant Whip. He has also served as the chairman of the Republican Study Committee, the "largest caucus of conservatives in Congress..."

While Johnson is a true conservative's Conservative, he is personally known for his affable manner, which likely helped him to win support from the more moderate members of his caucus. People just generally like him. This does not shield him, however, from the possibility of an overthrow at any time. Republicans have retained the rule that allows any member to force a vote that could oust him from the Speaker position.

More important than Johnson's personal politics, however, will be his ability to manage a fractious House of Representatives and move legislation in the coming weeks to avoid a government shutdown, address the fiscal year (FY) 24 federal budget and expiring programs, and broker deals around US support to key allies around the globe.

### **Budget and Appropriations**

#### **CR through November 18**

Congress successfully averted a government shutdown at the end of the federal fiscal year (Sept 30) by extending government funding until mid-November. The Continuing Resolution (CR) agreement that Kevin McCarthy, who was House Speaker at the time, brokered with Democrats extends current level funding through November 17. This buys Congress some time to consider the 12 annual appropriations bills for FY 24.

In addition to extending federal funding, the CR measure includes an additional \$16 billion in emergency funding for disaster response and extends several other programs that were set to expire on September 30, including:

- Federal Aviation Administration authorities through December 31
- Animal drug user fees through fiscal 2028
- Community health centers and pandemic preparedness authorities
- The National Flood Insurance Program
- Funding for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Homeland Security Department's National Cybersecurity Projection Program
- AG Department's Livestock Mandatory Reporting Program
- National Telecommunications and Information Administration expenses and salaries to administer broadband programs



- US Parole Commission
- Delay scheduled Medicaid payment cuts to disproportionate share hospitals until November 18

Certain programs are authorized to be funded at rates necessary to maintain the programs:

- SNAP
- Commodity Supplemental Food Program
- Section 521 Rental Assistance Program
- Agriculture Credit Insurance Fund Program
- Salary increases per the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) for wildland firefighter salaries

Speaker Johnson (R, LA), has indicated that he would support another short-term funding bill into 2024 to avoid a mid-November shutdown.

### **Supplemental Funding Requests**

The Senate has not waited for the House to forge ahead on funding measures, including possible consideration of emergency supplemental funding packages. The President has sent to Congress two supplemental funding requests:

\$106 billion Foreign Assistance supplemental funding request that proposes to provide aid to Israel, Ukraine, Taiwan and for border control; and

\$56 billion Domestic Spending and Disaster Aid request that includes \$23 billion to address natural disasters, including hurricanes and wildfires; \$16 billion to extend childcare subsidies and programs created during the pandemic; \$1 billion for American farmers to grow crops to be distributed abroad to address food shortages resulting from the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East.

Speaker Johnson has said he's open to considering Ukraine aid but has voted against it in the past. Johnson could attempt to tie Ukraine assistance to border security policies, which he flagged in his inaugural speech as a top priority.

### **FY 24 Appropriations**

The FY 24 appropriations process is also moving ahead. The Senate is expected to take up consideration of a three-bill appropriations package covering Agriculture-FDA, Military Construction-VA and Transportation-HUD funds. In the House, Speaker Johnson has stated that moving the FY 24 spending bills is a top priority and plans an aggressive schedule to get as many bills through the House as possible. His goal is to move the individual spending bills to avoid a December omnibus spending package that many conservatives have come to loathe. In the past, omnibus bills passed immediately before the December holiday recess have been loaded with extra spending and other provisions in order to secure the needed votes to move them in time.

### **Federal Agency Announcements**

#### Workforce Development

The Administration released a playbook highlighting examples of strategies and programs local governments have deployed with funding support from the American Rescue Plan's State and



Local Fiscal Recovery Fund program. The playbook outlines workforce development strategies. [Playbook: Workforce Investments that Work](#)

#### Rail Safety Awards

USDOT announced that more than \$1.4 billion was awarded via the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) program to 70 rail improvement projects in 35 states to improve rail safety and supply chain upgrades. Washington state won two awards: an award of \$72.8 million for several improvements to the Palouse River and Coulee City Railroad line, a rail line that's vital to the wheat supply chain; and \$4 million to replace two Tacoma Rail diesel locomotives to zero-emission battery-electric switcher locomotives.

#### Pollution Prevention Grants to Advance Environmental Justice

EPA announced \$16 million in pollution prevention grant awards via two grant programs: the Pollution Prevention Grant: Environmental Justice in Communities; and the Pollution Prevention Grant: Environmental Justice through Safer and More Sustainable Products Grant. Washington's Department of Ecology received \$412,327 for a project focused on providing technical assistance targeting the Hispanic/Latino community in central Washington around Safer Choice products.

### **Funding Availability**

#### Clean School Bus Rebate

EPA announced the availability of \$500 million to replace diesel school buses with low-no emission buses. Deadline: 01/31/24 [Clean School Bus Rebate](#)

#### Electric Vehicle Charger Reliability and Accessibility Accelerator (USDOT)

\$100 million for projects to support the repair or replacement of existing non-operational publicly accessible EV chargers. Deadline: 11/13/23 [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#)

#### Consumer Electronics Battery Recycling, Reprocessing and Battery Collection (DOE)

\$125 million available to support the recycling of consumer electronics batteries and battery-containing devices. Deadline: 11/29/23 [Grant information and application](#)

#### National Fish Passage Program (NOAA)

\$38 million for technical assistance for restoration projects that ensure fish have access to high-quality habitat. Deadline: 12/31/23 [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#)

#### National Fish Passage Program (DOI)

\$38 million for dam removal, public safety barrier removal and river ecosystem restoration to improve fish passage. Deadline: 12/31/23 [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#)

#### Weatherization Assistance Program (DOE)

\$25 million for projects that reduce energy costs for low-income households by improving energy efficiency. Deadline: Concept papers due: 8/31, final applications due 1/5/24 [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#)

**Recent and Upcoming Meetings with Congressional Staff and Agency Officials Tours**

Bellevue staff and officials continue to educate Congressional elected officials and staff about the City's top priorities in the region, including our own plans as well as others' projects. Some recent highlights include:

- Tour of the Wilburton area for Rep. DelBene's staff, highlighting Sound Transit East Link infrastructure, the Eastrail corridor, and the location of the Grand Connection, now in the early design phase.
- Grant application debrief meeting with FHWA to discuss Bellevue's recent application for culvert resources and what the agency is looking for specifically in applications for the next round of funding availability.
- The City is coordinating in a supportive role with the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce, who are planning their second annual DC Fly-in in early December.