

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION**Federal Legislative Update**

Joyce Nichols, Director of Intergovernmental Relations, 452-4225

City Manager's Office

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL**INFORMATION
ONLY**

No formal action is required; this is an informational briefing. Congress, the Administration, and Federal agencies each year approve actions that impact the City in a broad range of areas. Staff may recommend, and/or Council may wish to direct, communication to the City's congressional delegation on a range of issues throughout the year.

RECOMMENDATION

NA

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS**D.C. Big Picture Update**

The major update is on the results of the 2020 General Election. President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris will take office on January 20. We offer congratulations to them and to the more than 152 million Americans who voted and participated in the democratic process. This is, by far, the highest election turnout in our country's history, and should be celebrated. This federal update will focus on the results of the General Election and what the results might mean in the coming months and years.

2020 ELECTIONS: NATIONAL and REGIONAL OVERVIEW

President: The big story, of course, is the race for the White House and President-elect Joe Biden's victory over President Donald Trump. Mr. Biden will likely end up with 306 Electoral College Votes to Mr. Trump's 232 Electoral College Votes; and he is on track to win the popular vote by more than six million votes. Even though President Trump has not conceded, and it is likely he will continue questioning the vote counts in states where the outcome was close, the ultimate result will be the inauguration of the newly elected President and Vice President on January 20.

While things went well for Biden, the big blue wave that was predicted didn't materialize for Democrats running for the U.S. House and Senate.

Congress: While the election outcome went well for Mr. Biden, the blue wave that was predicted did not materialize in the contests for seats in the U.S. House and Senate. In the House, Democrats were expecting to pick up 10 to 15 seats. Instead, they lost seats, and it appears that Republicans will pick up as many 10 seats once all of the ballots have been counted and races have been certified. The

Democrats will continue to have the House majority, but it will be a close one. There are still a number of races that haven't been called—one House race in Iowa is separated by just 47 votes, so a hand recount is in process—and when all votes are tallied, the final House majority will likely be very close for the Democrats.

In the Senate, Democrats picked up one seat, and could take the majority by winning both of the Senate races in the Georgia runoff which is scheduled for January. Many are calculating that the Republicans have the advantage in those races because voters have frequently shown that they prefer divided government, and that will be the Republican message during those campaigns.

Washington State Results: In Washington state, Democrats won every statewide office with one exception. Secretary of State Kim Wyman won her race. The hotly contested State Senate race in East King County is headed for a recount. Incumbent Mark Mullet was trailing by 200+ votes on election night and is now ahead by fewer than 100 votes. Democrats will continue to have solid majorities in the State House and State Senate.

Former Tacoma Mayor Marilyn Strickland won the race to replace Denny Heck who chose not to run for his seat in Washington's 10th Congressional District. She is the first African-American woman to serve in Congress from Washington state. The rest of the state's congressional delegation will remain the same as all the incumbents were re-elected. Congressman Heck won the race for Lieutenant Governor. The next three months will feature lots of activity that will impact the country as it moves through a transition phase.

Transition at the White House: Over the next several weeks, there will be a flurry of activity and announcements. This all began soon after the election with President-elect Joe Biden announcing the formation of the coronavirus task force and naming his long-time aid, Ron Klain to be his White House Chief of Staff. Additionally, there is much speculation regarding cabinet posts and other positions in the new administration. Governor Jay Inslee, who won election to a third term, is rumored to be in the running for a post as Secretary of Energy or Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator.

We are already seeing signs of the President-elect's focus, possible initial strategy and executive orders that could be issues following his swearing-in on January 20 and the early months of his administration.

Lame Duck Session of Congress: Congress has returned to D.C. and is facing a December 11 deadline to deal with the federal budget to prevent a government shutdown. Three possible scenarios for the lame duck session are emerging as the two chambers finish out the 2020 session.

1. Pass another continuing resolution (CR) to keep the government funded and operating until March and then adjourn until January.
2. Pass a CR that keeps the government open until right before Christmas, and then pass an omnibus budget and spending bill before adjourning and heading home for the holidays.

3. All work together—with input from the incoming Biden administration so that it can start with a clean slate. As winter approaches, and daily virus totals running above 100,000, an agreement could come together in the final days of the year. Worries about the economy are growing as states across the country enact tough stay-at-home measures to combat the spread of COVID-19.

The second scenario may be the most likely outcome, however, with the nation's economy in a precarious state, there is hope that the third scenario would emerge. In addition to completing work on FY 2021 appropriations and another possible COVID-19 response package, Congress will also likely take up the National Defense Authorization Act during the lame duck session.

FY 2021 Budget

Congress and the White House have until December 11 to enact the 12 annual appropriations bills or pass another continuing resolution (CR) to keep the federal government open. House Democrats approved 10 of the 12 spending bills over the summer. The Senate Appropriations Committee has released details of all 12 appropriations bill proposals.

Republican and Democrat appropriations leaders are voicing optimism that an omnibus deal can be reached. The major areas of potential conflict are around emergency funds for the pandemic response and measures regarding racial disparities in policing and ongoing disagreement over funding for the Southern Border Wall and immigration issues.

Possible COVID-19 Pandemic Response Package #4

Negotiations on a possible package to help address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are now taking place directly between Senate Majority Leader McConnell (R-KY) and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA). Senator McConnell had released a \$1 trillion COVID-19 #4 response package in late October that included \$500 billion for targeted COVID-19 response and another round of funding for the Paycheck Protection Program. House Democrats passed a broad \$2.2 trillion package, the Updated Heroes Act, on October 1 and Speaker Pelosi continues to press for broad and significant pandemic response funding, especially direct funding to state and local governments, which is at the center of the Democrat's proposal.

Aside from stating that he would like to see a very big relief package—but a more targeted package—President Trump and Administration officials have been hands-off in the negotiations since the election. Speaking recently on the economy, President-elect Biden expressed support for the House Democrat's proposal and specifically called out his support and the need for aid to state and local governments.

JANUARY 5 U.S. SENATE RUN-OFF ELECTION IN GEORGIA

The outcome of the runoff election for the two seats in the U.S. Senate in Georgia will determine control of the U.S. Senate. Republicans now hold a 50-48 seat advantage in the Senate. If Democrats win both seats, Vice President-elect Harris would vote to break a 50-50 tie, giving advantage and control of the Senate to the Democrats.

In the runoff contests, incumbent Republican Senator Doug Perdue will face off against Democratic candidate Jon Ossoff for one of the seats. Incumbent Republican Kelly Loeffler will take on Democratic candidate Raphael Warnock in the contest for the second seat. Senator Perdue and President-elect Biden received the most votes in the Georgia elections in their respective races. Senator Perdue fell just short of the 50 percent needed to avoid a runoff—he received 49.7 percent of the vote in the very close contest.

While Senator Perdue will be the favorite in his race, Senator Loeffler will likely have a tougher time as she finished second overall in the vote tally and has drawn intense opposition from local and national liberal groups for several controversial comments she made in the past year. Republicans just need to win one, while the Democrats need to win both seats for control of the Senate.

JANUARY 20 INAUGURATION DAY

President-elect Biden becomes President at noon on Wednesday, January 20. That will certainly be a big moment for the country as the new president sets a new direction, and the swearing in of the first woman Vice President in U.S. history.

THE FIRST 100 DAYS

It is anticipated that President Biden will likely offer up multiple pieces of legislation designed to boost the economy and help the country recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. He will release his first budget on February 2 and, depending on the outcome of the lame duck congressional session, he will undoubtedly release a COVID-19 response and stimulus bill, an infrastructure package and other packages to address the economic impacts from the pandemic.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Congress, the Administration, and Federal agencies each year approve actions that impact the City in a broad range of areas. Staff may recommend, and/or Council may wish to direct, communication to the City's Congressional delegation on a range of issues throughout the year.

OPTIONS

N/A

ATTACHMENTS & AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS

N/A

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

N/A