

Hicks-Ray Associates

Implementing Strategies, Achieving Success



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TO: WESTCAS Membership

FROM: Hicks-Ray Associates

SUBJECT: FY18 Appropriations and the Border Security Issue

Late August in terms of Washington policy resembles in many ways the upcoming college football season. Unlike professional football there are no pre-season games in college football and this means that there isn't much to do at this point but speculate on the upcoming season. The same is true for the Washington scene. Everything will remain quiet until the Congress reconvenes on Tuesday, September 5th. Until then things are pretty much reduced to a guessing game.

There has been a great deal of publicity over the past few days with regard to President Trump's suggestion that he might allow the Federal government to be shut down if funding is not provided for border security. Here is how the border security issue fits into the FY18 Appropriations cycle.

Congress will return from its summer recess without a single one of the 12 Appropriations Subcommittee bills passed into law. This issue must be addressed no later than October 1 and the start of FY18 and there are only 12 legislative days in September in which to do so.

Before adjourning in late July, the House of Representatives folded 4 of the 12 FY18 Appropriations subcommittee bills into a single "mini-bus" which cleared the full House by a party line vote of 235 to 192. House Republicans offered an amendment to this "mini-bus" which added \$1.6 billion to the bill for border security enhancements in the Lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas and the San Diego region of Southern California. This is the "border funding" that President Trump is insisting be part of the final measure that is sent to him later in September.

The House added this funding with a 43-vote majority, but Senate rules require 60 votes to bring a measure to the floor of the Senate for debate. Senate Democrats have expressed strong opposition to the \$1.6 billion in border related funding. Given the party discipline that they have displayed so far this year, it is currently very unlikely that the Senate will agree with the House with regard to the \$1.6 billion. What then?

There are several possibilities. First, President Trump could simply not accept a FY18 funding package, whether it is a final bill or a Continuing Resolution that does not contain the \$1.6 billion that would result in a government shutdown. Second, the Congress could offer some lesser amount of money to be spent in ways more acceptable to Hill Democrats. Third, and most likely in our opinion, is a "Clean CR" which keeps the government open on October 1 and which punts the whole issue down the field towards the end of the year. This is the alternative that has been used for the past several years. It's amazing what can be accomplished when the Congress wants to get out of town. We just saw that in early August when the Senate approved 70 Trump nominations in a single day. The same could hold true for a Congress that wants to get out of town for Christmas.

The only thing that is certain is that the process and the end result will be a wild and uncertain ride with no telling what the final outcome will be.

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