



This Week in Congress

This was the last week of the 118th Congress and the new Congress will convene on January 3, 2025. Our newsletter will resume in the New Year once the 119th Congress is sworn in. In the interim, we wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Federal government funding was due to expire this Friday at midnight, but Congress worked on a continuing resolution (CR) to avert a shutdown. The CR included a supplemental disaster relief for farmers, along with provisions relating to federal government cost-sharing for repairs to the Baltimore Bridge, new trade rules for imports from Haiti and sub-Saharan African countries, supplemental funding for a new museum on the Mall, and a bill relating to the treatment of criminals following their release from prison. The CR would continue to fund the government through mid-March 2025. Additionally, the CR included riders such as (1) a one-year extension of the Farm bill; (2) a package of bills to reauthorize expiring health programs, including those relating to pandemic preparedness, opioid response, and Medicare telehealth; (3) supplemental disaster aid; and (4) provisions relating to U.S. investment in China and presidential power to enforce sanctions and impose prohibitions on critical technology sectors.

In addition to voting on the CR, the House voted on the Midnight Rules Relief Act (H.R. 115), which would amend the Congressional Review Act (CRA) to allow Congress to pass a single resolution to disapprove of multiple rules finalized during the final year of a presidential term.

Finally, the House voted on 51 measures to be considered under suspension of the rules, requiring a two-thirds majority vote for passage. The list includes legislation relating to healthcare, education, veterans and homeland security programs, federal broadband deployment, temporary federal judgeships, and the federal hiring process.

The Senate voted on the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) (H.R. 5009), the House-passed Water Resources Development Act (S. 4367), and on another House-passed bill (H.R. 82) that would repeal rules reducing Social Security benefits for people who receive additional pension benefits. Finally, the Senate voted on the last judicial nominees to be considered this year. If those judges are confirmed, President Biden will have secured 235 judicial appointments during his term.

Dairy Cliff Averted!

As mentioned, the CR included a one-year farm bill extension and the Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) program will be extended through December 31, 2025. The 25% premium discount will remain available to those producers who selected the discount back in 2019, consistent with last year's extension. Dairy cliff is averted through December 31, 2025.

The package provides \$30.780 billion to USDA for disaster assistance to producers who suffered losses in 2023 or 2024 on account of a variety of natural disasters. Within the larger total, the bill sets aside \$2 billion for assistance for livestock producers for drought, wildfires, and floods.

Unfortunately, the CR DOES NOT include our priority language to require USDA to conduct mandatory, auditable manufacturing cost surveys. Despite our valiant advocacy efforts, we obtained support from the chairs and ranking members of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees for having this language included in the year-end package. Regrettably, while the committees communicated their bipartisan, bicameral support to congressional leaders, the provision did not receive the unanimous sign-off that was needed at the leadership-level four corners. We do not believe this was on account of a substantive policy objection, and we will immediately caucus with NMPF, IDFA, and AFBF (farm bureau), who are fully engaged in this effort, to get the language included in the next funding bill due on March 14, 2025. We've already been in touch with the House and Senate Ag Committees and the Appropriations Committees on a path toward including this in the full-year deal. We are hopeful that full-year appropriations bills will allow greater opportunity to include language like this, plus needed funding.

U.S. House Agriculture Committee in the 119th Congress – NY Losses Representation, but PA gains a Committee Seat!

As we enter the 119th Congress, the House Agriculture Committee will be led by Chair GT Thompson (R-PA), along with Ranking Member Craig (D-MN), who is replacing Rep. Scott (D-FL). Both leaders of the Committee are well versed and poised on dairy issues. Additionally, Rep. Molinaro (R-NY), who lost his re-election bid, and with Rep. Langworthy (R-NY) moving to the House Energy & Commerce Committee, New York has lost its representation on the Committee. However, Pennsylvania gained a Committee Member with Rep.-elect Rob Bresnahan (R-PA), who beat six term incumbent, Rep. Cartwright (D-PA), and he will represent PA's 8th Congressional District, which encompasses Wayne, Pike, and Lackawanna (Scranton) Counties. Candidly, I have known Rob for nearly 14 years and I believe he will be a great asset to us in the Northeast. Rob is a young guy, who owned and operated a 150 employee electrical contracting company, which he bought from his grandparents several years ago. I look forward to us getting to know him better and advising him on our dairy issues. Finally, Rep. Newhouse (R-WA), a great dairy champion, who will also continue to serve on the Appropriations Committee, will be joining the committee.

OSHA Updates

- **Heat Injury and Illness Prevention Standard Comment Period Extended**

On November 29, 2024, OSHA announced a 15-day extension of the comment deadline for the agency's proposed heat injury and illness prevention standard. The new deadline to submit comments will be January 14th. As part of the announcement, OSHA has also scheduled an informal public hearing, which will be held virtually and will begin June 16, 2025, at 9:30 a.m. Additional information on how to access the informal hearing will be posted at <https://www.osha.gov/heat-exposure/rulemaking>.

As of the end of November, seven states (California, Colorado, Minnesota, Oregon and Washington, and most recently Maryland and Nevada) have approved or implemented heat-related mandates for employers.