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FEW Washington Legislative Update September 16-30, 2024

Congress: Stopgap bill, passed by House and Senate with bipartisan majorities, extends funding until December 20, 2024.

President Biden's signing of the bill came one day after the House and Senate passed the legislation with sweeping bipartisan majorities in both chambers. "The passage of this bill gives Congress more time to pass full-year funding bills by the end of this year," Biden said Wednesday. "My administration will work with Congress to ensure these bills deliver for America's national defense, veterans, seniors, children and working families, and address urgent needs for the American people, including communities recovering from disasters."

The President signed a three-month government funding bill on Thursday, September 26, averting an imminent shutdown and delaying a fuller conversation about government spending until after the November elections.

The stopgap spending bill, known as a continuing resolution or CR, will extend government funding until December 20. It will also provide an additional \$231 million dollars for the Secret Service "for operations necessary to carry out protective operations including the 2024 presidential campaign and national special security events", following the two recent assassination attempts against Donald Trump.

The House speaker, Mike Johnson (R-Louisiana), had initially tried to pass a proposal that combined a six-month stopgap funding measure. Speaker Johnson announced on Tuesday, September 17, that the House would move forward with a plan to vote on a partisan stopgap measure despite Democratic opposition

Congress had until the end of the month of September to fund the government, making a short-term measure necessary to avoid a government shutdown. The plan is House Republican leadership's opening move in the funding fight — a continuing resolution to

keep the government funded through March 28, while attaching a noncitizen voting bill that Democrats generally see as a nonstarter.

The measure, known as the [SAVE Act](#), is aimed at targeting the practice of illegal voting. It would require proof of citizenship to register to vote in federal elections. The legislation passed the House earlier this year. The White House, congressional Democrats and some Republicans pushed for an even shorter-term bill that keeps the government open past the election, into December. That would buy bipartisan negotiators more time to strike a deal on fiscal year 2025 funding.

On September 17, the [Senate](#) is expected to complete consideration of the [nomination](#) of Mary Kathleen Costello to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania and take up a Motion to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to Calendar [S.4445](#), Right to IVF Act, upon reconsideration.

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Tier I

FEW's Advocacy Day was held on September 18, 2024!

Federally Employed Women's (FEW's) Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill was a remarkable event that demonstrated the commitment of FEW's members to advocate for important issues affecting women in the federal workforce. Advocates from across the country gathered to meet with congressional staff and members, sharing personal stories, insights, and pressing concerns regarding legislation impacting their rights and opportunities. FEW Members also recognized, Representatives Gerry Connolly, Rosa DeLauro, Eleanor Norton-Holmes, and Senators Ben Cardin, Lisa Murkowski and Kirsten Gillibrand by providing commemorative plaques for the congressional members who have demonstrated support for FEW's members and the FEW organization over the last congress. The dedicated discussions aimed to influence policy and ensure that women's voices were heard in the halls of power. Meanwhile, FEW's National President, Pamela H. Richards, and Executive Vice President, Adrienne Callahan, and Wanda Killingsworth, Vice President of Bylaws, had the honor of visiting the White House, where they engaged in discussions with a key official in the Office of Public Engagement, further amplifying FEW's mission at the highest levels of government. This day not only showcased the unwavering spirit of FEW members but also marked a crucial step towards fostering advocacy and change at both the legislative and executive branches.

Women in the Military:

Report 14.3 million Military Caregivers in the United States

RAND published [America's Military and Veteran Caregivers: Hidden Heroes Emerging from the Shadows](#), a deep-dive report based on new survey data on the lives of America's caregivers to better understand those who care for wounded, ill, and injured service members and veterans. The report estimates that 5.5 percent of U.S. adults – 14.3 million people – are military and veteran caregivers. (This new report follows on [RAND's 2014 report](#) and provides important updates.)

Key findings include:

- There are 14.3 million military and veteran caregivers, representing 5.5 percent of the U.S. adult population. There are an additional 91.3 million civilian caregivers (35.0 percent of U.S. adults) caring for wounded, ill, or injured civilian adults.
- While the majority of caregivers are children, parents or spouses of the care recipient, nearly one-quarter of caregivers for post-9/11 servicemembers and veterans, and more than 15 percent of pre-9/11 caregivers, are friends or neighbors.
- Among military/veteran caregivers to individuals age 60 and under, over half were nontraditional caregivers: friends, neighbors, and relatives (e.g., siblings, aunts, and uncles).
- Across all caregivers, most (78 to 81 percent) spend between one and 30 hours per week providing care. Under 10 percent spend less than one hour per week, and 11 to 16 percent spend 31 hours or more per week caregiving.
- Roughly two times as many post-9/11 military caregivers (47 percent) reported needing to make work adjustments as a result of caregiving as pre-9/11 caregivers (23 percent) and civilian caregivers (27 percent). Similarly, 62 percent of post-9/11 military caregivers reported that caregiving caused financial strain relative to roughly 30 and 40 percent of pre-9-11 caregivers and civilian caregivers, respectively.
- Half of all post-9/11 military caregivers and a quarter of pre-9/11 military and civilian caregivers reported taking time off from work or stopping work temporarily because of caregiving
- The estimated aggregate economic value generated by military/veteran caregiving activities, which are largely uncompensated, ranges from \$119 billion to \$485 billion per year. Military/veteran caregivers incur an estimated \$8,583 in annual out-of-pocket costs associated with their caregiving responsibilities. Military/veteran caregivers forgo an estimated \$4,522 in annual household income.

Comprehensive Paid Leave for Federal Employees Act ([H.R. 856/S. 274](#))

56 co-sponsors in the House, 12 co-sponsors in the Senate (*Converts unpaid caregiving & medical FMLA leave to paid leave for federal employees*) Note: parental is currently paid.

FEW Washington Legislative Update – September 16-30, 2024 Tier II

Federal Workforce:

Telework

In recent years, the debate over remote work has intensified, particularly within the federal government.

After more than a year of pressure from Congress on the Biden administration to reduce telework among federal employees, the release of the latest Office of Management and Budget report provides critical insights that challenge this pressure. The report shows that, contrary to congressional concerns, federal agencies are easily exceeding the administration's 50 percent in-office goal for telework-eligible employees. In fact, government-wide, roughly 61 percent of the work hours performed by telework-eligible federal employees have been in person.

The data indicates that a majority of federal employees are already meeting or exceeding in-office expectations. About 54 percent of the federal government's 2.2 million employees work fully in person due to job requirements, with the other 46 percent eligible for telework. Among those eligible for telework, only about 10 percent work fully remotely. These figures suggest that telework is not as pervasive as some lawmakers may have believed, and that agencies are balancing in-person and remote work effectively.

According to the report, agencies such as the Departments of Agriculture and State have approximately 80 percent of their telework-eligible employees working in person. Other agencies, including the Departments of Treasury, Education, and Housing and Urban Development, report less than 40 percent in-person work hours for telework-eligible employees. This variability reflects the diverse operational needs and missions of federal agencies, which require different levels of in-office presence. It's a testament to the flexibility and adaptability of federal work environments to meet diverse operational needs.

The Office of Management and Budget's findings highlight that federal agencies are strategically aligning their work environments with mission-specific requirements rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. This alignment allows agencies to optimize

performance and effectiveness, ensuring that telework does not hinder mission-critical operations.

Moreover, the federal government's 61 percent rate of work hours performed by telework-eligible employees aligns with trends observed in the private sector. As a recent Congressional Budget Office report points out, telework rates in the federal workforce are generally in line with those in the private sector, which further dispels the notion that federal employees are overly reliant on telework or "just phoning it in."

Recall how this same Congressional Budget Office report shocked members of Congress critical of remote work in a recent House hearing. Rep. Glenn Grothman (R-Wisc.), upon learning that only 22 percent of federal employees typically worked from home in 2022, compared to 25 percent of private-sector employees, asked in disbelief: "Did you say that federal employees got back to work quicker than in the private sector?"

Despite these findings, Congress keeps pressuring the White House to curtail telework in the federal workforce. This pressure is rooted in concerns about productivity, accountability and the utilization of federal office spaces. Lawmakers have argued that telework may lead to decreased employee performance and inefficient use of government real estate.

But the new Office of Management and Budget report challenges these assumptions, providing evidence that telework has not compromised productivity or performance. In fact, many agencies have reported improvements in employee engagement and job satisfaction, which are critical factors in workforce performance and retention. Additionally, the report highlights that agencies have made significant efforts to optimize office space utilization, reducing costs and improving the efficiency of federal real estate portfolios.

Telework offers numerous benefits that contribute to a more resilient and effective federal workforce. For instance, telework enhances employee satisfaction by providing flexibility, which in turn can lead to higher retention rates and lower turnover. This flexibility is particularly important for attracting and retaining top talent in a competitive job market. Furthermore, telework can reduce commuting times, leading to better work-life balance and increased productivity. By leveraging telework as a strategic tool, federal agencies can maintain high levels of performance while meeting the evolving needs of their employees and missions.

The Office of Management and Budget report underscores the need for a nuanced approach to telework policies that reflect the diverse missions and operational needs of federal agencies. They should also continue to invest in technology and infrastructure that support remote work capabilities in appropriate jobs. By providing employees with the tools and resources they need to succeed in a hybrid work environment, agencies can ensure that telework remains a viable and productive option.

Additionally, agencies should prioritize ongoing evaluation and adjustment of telework policies to align with emerging best practices and workforce trends. This continuous improvement process will enable federal agencies to remain competitive in attracting and retaining talent while delivering results for the public.

The newest data clearly show that the pressure from Congress to decrease telework in the federal government is unwarranted. Agencies exceeding the Biden administration's goals for in-person work and leveraging telework to enhance employee engagement and performance.

Rather than curb telework, policymakers should support agencies in optimizing their work environments to meet mission-critical needs. By embracing telework as a strategic asset, Uncle Sam can build a more resilient, efficient, and effective workforce that is well-equipped to serve the public in the years to come.

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Tier III

Women as a Class:

Violence Against Women

Justice Department's Office on Violence Against Women Announces \$86.16M in Grants to Support American Indian and Native Alaskan Survivors of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Dating Violence, Stalking, and Sex Trafficking

The Justice Department announced yesterday more than \$86.16 million in grants administered by the Tribal Affairs Division within the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) to American Indian and Alaska Native communities to support survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, and sex trafficking.

The grants provided through the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) will fund services for victims of these crimes while providing support for Tribal governments, including law enforcement, prosecutors, and Tribal courts, to enhance safety and support Tribal sovereignty. The Tribal Affairs Division within OVW is responsible for the administration of Tribal specific grant programs and initiatives, management of Tribal specific training and technical assistance, and coordination with other federal departments and Justice Department offices on Tribal issues. Principal Deputy Director Allison Randall of OVW made the announcement at the annual Tribal Sexual Assault Services Program Institute, a convening of Tribal officials, victim advocates, and other Tribal leaders, as well as OVW-funded training and technical assistance advisors, who work to support Tribes in developing and improving programs to support survivors of sexual assault.

“Tribal communities, and particularly American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls, have experienced disproportionately high levels of violence for too long,” said Attorney General Merrick B. Garland. “This \$86 million dollar investment represents the Justice Department’s commitment to working in partnership with Tribal nations to address and prevent gender-based violence and provide safety and justice for survivors.”

Included in these awards is more than \$7.58 million that OVW is awarding under its new Grants to Indian Tribal Governments Program: Strengthening Tribal Advocacy Responses Track (START) Program. The program is for Tribal governments that have not previously or recently participated in OVW’s Grants to Indian Tribal Governments Program and focuses on capacity building early in the project period. Awardees will receive additional training, technical assistance, and support to implement their programs. Additionally, OVW awarded \$45.17 million under the established Tribal Governments Program to support Tribal governments in responding to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, sex trafficking, and stalking in Tribal communities.

OVW also launched a new grant program this year through its Healing and Response Teams Special Initiative, which was created in response to recommendations made by the Not Invisible Act Commission. OVW awarded \$2 million under this initiative to support the creation, training, and sustainability of Healing and Response Teams using a Tribal-based model of care to respond to Missing or Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP) cases related to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, and sex trafficking.

OVW is awarding grants totaling more than \$3.57 million to Tribes under its Special Tribal Criminal Grant (STCJ) Program and \$1.5 million under its Special Tribal Criminal Jurisdiction: Targeted Support for Alaska Native Tribes Special Initiative. The programs support Tribes that are preparing to exercise or are already exercising STCJ to ensure that victims find safety and justice and that non-Indians who commit covered crimes within their communities, including domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and sex trafficking, are held accountable.

OVW is also awarding grants totaling \$3.75 million under its Violence Against Women Tribal Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Initiative to support the collaboration between Tribes and U.S. Attorneys’ Offices in their investigation and prosecution of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, sex trafficking, and stalking cases in Indian country.

OVW is also awarding grants totaling more than \$11.11 million under its Tribal Sexual Assault Services Program to support Tribes, Tribal organizations, and Tribal nonprofit organizations in operating sexual assault services programs in Indian country and Alaska Native villages. Additionally, OVW awarded funding totaling more than \$8.28 million under its Grants to Tribal Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Coalitions

Program to support the development and operation of nonprofit, nongovernmental Tribal domestic violence and sexual assault coalitions.

“We are committed to addressing the disproportionately high rates of violent crime faced by American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls and ensuring everyone can access both safety and justice,” said Principal Deputy Associate Attorney General Benjamin C. Mizer. “This funding supports Tribal governments and Tribal organizations’ efforts to provide legal services, housing assistance, medical care, and counseling to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and other forms of gender-based violence.”

OVW is also awarding grants totaling \$3.2 million for Tribal training and technical assistance (TA) programs. The TA programs support grantees through in-person and online educational opportunities, peer-to-peer networks, on-site technical assistance, and tailored support to help grantees further develop expertise and targeted strategies to implement their programs successfully.

“The strength of VAWA is enhancing a coordinated community response,” said OVW Director Rosie Hidalgo. “These grant programs provide critical support for Tribes to address gender-based violence by fostering essential partnerships among victim services organizations, law enforcement, prosecutors, community-based organizations, and other key stakeholders who play a crucial role in supporting survivors and providing pathways for them to access justice, safety, and healing.”

OVW provides leadership in developing the nation’s capacity to reduce violence through the implementation of the Violence Against Women Act and subsequent legislation. Created in 1995, OVW has awarded more than \$11 billion in funding to communities across the country that are developing programs, policies, and practices aimed at ending domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. In addition to overseeing federal grant programs, OVW supports policy development and undertakes special initiatives in response to community-identified needs. Learn more at www.justice.gov/ovw.

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