CALENDAR:

The House and Senate will both return Monday. The Senate will stay in session through Thursday, while the House will stay in session through Friday.

LAST WEEK IN THE HOUSE:

The House came back to work on Monday, and took up and passed a bill under Suspension of the Rules.

On Tuesday, the House took up and passed H.Res. 535, the Rule governing floor consideration of H.R. 2467, the PFAS Action Act of 2021; H.R. 2668, the Consumer Protection and Recovery Act; and H.R. 3985, the Allies Act of 2021. Then the House took up and passed another series of bills under Suspension of the Rules. And then the House took up H.R. 2668, the Consumer Protection and Recovery Act. The bill passed by a vote of 221-205.

On Wednesday, the House took up and passed H.R. 2467, the PFAS Action Act.

On Thursday, the House took up and passed H.R. 3985, the Allies Act.

And then they were done.

THIS WEEK IN THE HOUSE:

The House will come back Monday, with the first votes set for 6:30 PM. At that time, the House is scheduled to take up 19 bills under Suspension of the Rules.

After that, the House is expected to take up H.R. 4502, a minibus appropriations bill that combines the appropriations bills for seven of the 12 annual appropriations bills – Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, Agriculture, Rural Development, Energy and Water Development, Financial Services and General Government, Interior, Environment, Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development. Total budget authority is $602 billion, and total outlays would be $759 billion.
In addition, the House may consider H.R. 4346, the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act; H.R. 4373, the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act; and H.R. 4505, the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act.

LAST WEEK IN THE SENATE:

On Monday, the Senate returned to session and confirmed Tiffany P. Cunningham to be a U.S. Circuit Judge for the Federal Circuit.

On Tuesday, the Senate voted to invoke cloture on, and then to confirm, the nomination of Kenneth Allen Polite, Jr., to be as Assistant Attorney General at the Department of Justice. The Senate also voted to invoke cloture on the nomination of Jennifer Ann Abruzzo to be General Counsel of the National Labor Relations Board.

Then the Senate took up H.R. 1652, a bill to deposit certain funds into the Crime Victims Fund, to waive matching requirements, and for other purposes. The Senate considered an amendment offered by PA GOP Sen. Pat Toomey, but it was not agreed to; then the Senate considered the bill, and passed it by a vote of 100-0.

On Wednesday, the Senate voted by 50-50 to confirm Jennifer Ann Abruzzo to be General Counsel of the National Labor Relations Board. Then the Senate voted to invoke cloture on, and then to confirm, the nomination of Bonnie D. Jenkins to be Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security.

Then the Senate took up Leader Schumer’s motion to proceed to H.R. 3684, the House-passed bill that will serve as the vehicle for the bipartisan infrastructure framework bill, if it ever gets written. But because the bill had yet to be written, no Republican voted for it, and cloture was not invoked. At the end of the voting period, Leader Schumer switched his vote from “Aye” to “Nay,” so he could then enter a motion to reconsider at a later date.

On Thursday, the Senate voted to confirm the nomination of Jill Hruby to be Under Secretary for Nuclear Security at the Department of Energy.

And then they were done.

THIS WEEK IN THE SENATE:

The Senate will return on Monday, and will resume consideration of the nomination of Todd Sunhwae Kim to be an Assistant Attorney General at the Department of Justice.

At 5:30 PM, the Senate will proceed to a roll call vote on cloture on that nomination.
A SELECT COMMITTEE FOR JANUARY 6?

Ever since Speaker Pelosi announced that she would form a Select Committee to investigate the events surrounding January 6, the question has been, what would Republican leader Kevin McCarthy do? Would he boycott the committee by simply not appointing any GOP members, or would he load it up with conservative and/or pro-Trump All Stars?

In the end, he decided to split the difference. On Tuesday, he announced the appointments of five Republicans – Jim Jordan of OH, Jim Banks of IN, Troy Nehls of TX, Rodney Davis of IL, and Kelly Armstrong of ND. Banks would be the party’s leader on the Select Committee.

But on Wednesday, Speaker Pelosi declared that she was exercising her veto power over two of McCarthy’s picks – Jordan and Banks. McCarthy responded by threatening to pull the remaining three Republicans if she didn’t reverse herself; when she failed to do so, he followed through and pulled Nehls, Armstrong, and Davis.

The downside of having no Republicans on the Select Committee is that there is no one there to carry our side’s water during any public hearings the committee might hold. And during confidential hearings, there’ll be no Republicans there to keep an eye on things. The Democrats will be able to interview any witnesses they want to, and will ask only the questions they want asked. Republicans, on the other hand, will get to interview precisely no one, and will have no questions asked.

The upside of having no Republicans on the Select Committee is that it proves the point that this is not a fact-finding committee approaching the task of learning what happened on January 6 from a neutral, non-biased standpoint.

By the way, in case you’re wondering if Jordan and Banks got kicked off the Select Committee because they voted to challenge the certification of certain states’ Electoral College votes, that would seem to be a reasonable inference, except for the fact that Congressman Nehls voted to challenge the certification of certain states’ Electoral College votes, too, but he was not axed from the committee.

And while we’re at it, Congressmen Schiff and Raskin, who Speaker Pelosi appointed to the committee, were leaders of the Trump impeachment posses. Their claim to neutrality doesn’t exist. And as I pointed out in an earlier Washington Report, Congressman Bennie Thompson – the chairman of the Select Committee – is suing President Trump for his actions on January 6, so it’s not like he’s really waiting around to investigate and learn what happened on January 6; he’s already confident he knows what happened, and he’s suing the former president over it.

That would have been enough news on the Select Committee front for any one week, except that on Friday afternoon, Yahoo! News reported that the staff director of the committee would be former CIA Inspector General David Buckley. That would be unremarkable, except for the fact that Buckley has a problematic past – Yahoo! News obtained what it calls “a previously unpublished 2019 report compiled by the Department of Homeland Security’s watchdog office showing that investigators urged the CIA to take action against Buckley for his alleged retaliation against a whistleblower …”
The authors of the report, according to Yahoo! News, recommended that “at minimum” the CIA determine “whether [their] findings affect the security clearances” of Buckley and several other senior CIA officials. Buckley’s security clearances remain uncertain, and it is “unclear” whether the CIA heeded the report’s recommendations or took any action against him or his former colleagues.

And then on Sunday, Speaker Pelosi announced that she would be appointing Republican Congressman Adam Kinzinger of IL to the Select Committee. Along with Wyoming Republican Liz Cheney, Kinzinger voted to establish the committee – in fact, they were the only two Republicans to do so.

That means the Select Committee will launch its first hearing this week with seven Democrats and two Republicans.

HUNTER BIDEN HEADACHES, CON’T: “HOLD MY BEER, PICASSO” EDITION, PART DEUX:

Cast your mind back all of two weeks, and join me in remembering the news of Hunter Biden’s newfound talent for painting, and how the White House ethics team had set up a bizarre scheme in which the younger Biden was going to be able to sell his “art” for up to half a million dollars per piece, and no one would know who was buying it. Does that ring a bell?

Well, unring it. In the latest update to this story of padding the Biden Family Coffers, comes news that Hunter WILL be meeting the people who are buying his “art.” Two shows are set to take place later this year – one in Los Angeles, the other in New York – and Hunter will be showing off his works and meeting prospective buyers.

Asked Walter Shaub, the ethics adviser for the Obama Administration, “Is Hunter Biden going to walk around the art show with a blindfold on? It just goes to show you the focus isn’t on government ethics. It’s just showing the child of a president can cash in on the presidency.”

Asked how this arrangement squared with the earlier White House promise that Hunter would not know who was buying his art, White House spokesman Andrew Bates referred CBS to an earlier statement that said, “The president has established the highest ethical standards of any administration in American history, and his family’s commitment to rigorous processes like this is a prime example.”

DEBT CEILING:

On Wednesday, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell dropped a bomb on the Democrats. In an exclusive interview with Punchbowl News, McConnell said Democrats would have to raise or suspend the debt ceiling by themselves, without any help at all from congressional Republicans.
“I can’t imagine there will be a single Republican in this environment we’re in now – this free-for-all for taxes and spending – to vote to raise the debt limit ... I think the answer is they need to put it in the reconciliation bill,” which could pass with 50 Democrat votes.

The two-year suspension of the debt limit passed in the summer of 2019 expires on July 31, which is less than one week away. When it expires, the debt limit will be set at whatever level the debt is on July 31, and the Treasury Department will employ what it calls “extraordinary measures” – that is, what the rest of us call “gimmicks” and “smoke and mirrors” – to continue to pay the nation’s bills. According to a new report from the Congressional Budget Office, that should carry us through October or maybe even November. But on Friday, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen sent a letter to congressional leaders warning that the government may not be able to pay its debt obligations past September.

Democrats are not at all happy about this. They point to three times during the Trump Administration that they participated in raising or suspending the debt limit, and they ask why can’t Republicans repay the favor?

Keep in mind, if Democrats decide their only option is to include a debt ceiling provision in the reconciliation bill, so they don’t need GOP votes to pass it, it cannot be a provision that suspends the debt limit until a date certain down the road; it must be a provision that actually raises the debt limit, by a certain dollar amount.

INFRASTRUCTURE:

Well, the Wednesday cloture vote has come and gone. Republicans refused to vote to move to consideration of a bill that hadn’t been written yet. The bill hadn’t been written yet because the final agreements had not been reached. They were supposed to need just a few more days.

Senators on both sides of the negotiations say they still need another day or two to finalize the agreement. Apparently the pay-fors are all done, and the only thing that remains outstanding at this point is transit funding. Republicans believe they’ve made a very generous offer on the subject area, but Democrats apparently want more.

Here’s what I think is likely to happen:

I think both sides will find a way to reach agreement, because both sides want to find a way to reach an agreement. And when that agreement is reached, Majority Leader Schumer will enter a Motion to Reconsider, and he’ll bring the cloture vote back to the floor. And cloture will be invoked, with 60 or maybe 61 votes.

Then Schumer will bring up a budget resolution that would establish reconciliation instructions for a $3.5 trillion reconciliation package.

He wants to get both the infrastructure package and the budget resolution passed before the Senate breaks for its August recess. The Senate has ten more legislative days left before it is scheduled to leave town for six weeks. We’ll see if he can pull it off.
JENNY BETH MARTIN/TEA PARTY PATRIOTS:

WT: Jenny Beth Martin: Never Forget Teacher's Unions Fought To Keep Schools Closed And Now Fight For Critical Race Theory

WT: GOP Plans Cuban Freedom Protest for Day of Jan. 6 Hearing

Breitbart: Tea Party Publishes Fight CRT Toolkit: Educate Not Indoctrinate Kids

ET: CRT Opposition Grows Stronger, Bolder, And More Organized: 'You Have To Fight Fire With Fire'

FrontPage: Surviving Socialism

THE CORRUPT POLITICIANS ACT:

Hill: Biden Says He Doesn't Want Voting Rights 'Wrapped Up' In Filibuster

NYT: Democrat's Divide On Voting Rights Widens As Biden Faces Pressure

DEBT CEILING:

WaPo: Debt Ceiling Emerges As Flashpoint As Republicans Say They Might Not Support An Increase

Politico: Democrats Slam McConnell Over Debt Limit Time Bomb

Hill: Senate Braces For A Nasty Debt Ceiling Fight

Hill: GOP Sees Debt Ceiling as Its Leverage Against Biden

A SELECT COMMITTEE FOR JANUARY 6?

Politico: Democrats Begrudgingly Accept McCarthy's Picks For Jan.6 Committee

Politico: Jan.6 Select Panel Dems Cast A Wide Net For Trump

House Speaker Statement: Pelosi Statement On Republican Recommendations To Serve On The Select Jan.6 Committee To Investigate The Jan.6 Attack On The Capitol

McCarthy Statement About Pelosi’s Abuse Of Power On Jan.6 Select Committee
Politico: Pelosi Vetoes Banks, Jordan For Jan.6 Select Committee

WaPo: Pelosi Rejects Two Republicans Picked By McCarthy To Investigate The Jan 6 Insurrection

Hill: House Erupts In Anger Over Jan.6 And Trump's Role

Politico: 'Deadly Serious': Pelosi Goes To War With GOP Over Jan.6

Hill: Democrats Plow Ahead With Jan.6 Probe, Eyeing New GOP Reinforcements

Yahoo! Exclusive: Jan. 6 Select Committee Will Include Former CIA Inspector General Found To Have Retaliated Against Whistleblower

NRO: Pelosi Announces Appointment of Kinzinger to January 6 Committee

HUNTER BIDEN HEADACHES, CON’T: “HOLD MY BEER, PICASSO” EDITION, PART DEUX:

CBS: Hunter Biden Expected To Meet With Potential Art Buyers

NYP: Hunter Biden Will Reportedly Meet with Prospective Buyers of His Art

INFRASTRUCTURE:

Hill: GOP Centrists Call On Schumer To Delay Infrastructure Vote

Hill: Negotiators Struggle To Finish Infrastructure Deal With Clock Ticking

Politico: Senior House Dem Trashes Senate's Bipartisan Infrastructure Talks

Politico: Pelosi's Dems Grit Their Teeth Amid Senate Infrastructure Drama

Politico: Dems Are 'Not Particularly Pleased' With The Senate Infrastructure Deal, They'll Back It Anyway

Axios: Republicans Sink Key Procedural Vote On Bipartisan Infrastructure Plan

WSJ: Republicans Block Infrastructure Bill But Talks To Continue

Hot Air: Why Is The Senate GOP Tolerating Pelosi's Threat Not To Take Up The Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill Until The Reconciliation Bill Passes?

Hill: Frustration Builds As Infrastructure Talks Drag

WSJ: Senators Try To Finalize Deal on Infrastructure Package
MISCELLANEOUS:

NRO: The Foolishness Of Climate Tariffs

Jewish Voice: Ben And Jerry's Boycott Of Occupied Palestinian Territory Met With Swift Backlash - Israel Obsessed Fake Humanitarianism

NYT: For Republicans, Deep Wounds Fuel Resistance to Bolstering the IRS

Politico: House Freedom Caucus Asks McCarthy To Try To Remove Pelosi as Speaker