

President Biden participated in high-level summits in Rome, Italy, for the G20, and in Glasgow, Scotland, for the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26). A major piece of legislation, the bipartisan infrastructure framework, was signed into law after a series of starts-and-stops on the House floor and a process was formalized for consideration of another priority for the President's domestic agenda, the Build Back Better social spending plan. A number of other items will require lawmakers' attention over the coming weeks. Democrats suffered a setback in off-year elections this month. A series of moves signal the strengthening of transatlantic trade ties.

Biden at the G20

President Biden was in Rome in late October for the G20 Summit, the first face to face meeting of world leaders since Japan hosted the summit in June of 2019. While in Rome, the President held bilateral meetings with a number of world leaders including Italian prime minister, Mario Draghi, the summit's host; President Macron of France, the first in person meeting for the two leaders since the diplomatic row over the trilateral security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States; President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey; German Chancellor Angela Merkel; and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong of Singapore. Biden also met with Pope Francis. Several world leaders were noticeably absent—President Xi Jinping of China, President Vladimir Putin of Russia, and President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador of Mexico. The ongoing coronavirus pandemic, specifically vaccine inequality, topped the agenda for the G20, a convening of the world's major economies that account for more than 80% of global GDR and over 75% of global trade. Leaders agreed to [support the World Health Organization's \(WHO\) goal of vaccinating at least 40% of the world's population](#) against the coronavirus by 2021, and 70% by the middle of next year, by boosting the supply of vaccines in developing countries and removing supply and financing constraints. Climate change was the other major agenda item. [Leaders agreed](#) to end coal financing by the end of the year and to aim to contain global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, signaling a commitment from major economies in advance of the United Nations climate summit in Glasgow (see next section). Other items addressed were the financial inclusion gap between men and women, support for small and medium sized businesses, the global economy, and development aid. G20 leaders also [approved](#) an agreement that will subject multinational corporations to a minimum 15% tax to “ensure giant corporations pay their fair” and deter tax avoidance. On the margins of the G20 summit, [Biden met with leaders from France, Germany, and the United Kingdom](#) to discuss the risks posed to international security by Iran's escalating nuclear program—[negotiations on the program are expected to resume later this month.](#)

Trying to Save the Planet in Glasgow

More than 100 world leaders as well as thousands of climate scientists, activists, civil society representatives, and business leaders are gathered in Glasgow, Scotland for the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26). Opening the conference, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres [pleaded for more aggressive steps to be taken](#) to curb changes to the climate, signaling a widely-held concern that the actions taken and commitments made at COP26 will be insufficient. Prime Minister Boris Johnson, serving as the host of the conference, issued a blunt warning to global leaders attempting to address the climate emergency, saying: [“If Glasgow fails, the whole thing fails”](#) and that we are “one minute to

midnight” to prevent climate catastrophe. President Biden warned that **“none of us can escape the worst that’s yet to come if we fail to seize this moment.”** Former President Barack Obama, attending as a private citizen, sought to galvanize the activist class, saying: **“I want you to stay angry....Keep pushing harder.”** The primary goal of the gathering was to secure enough commitments on emissions reductions to meet the Paris Agreement threshold of limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels by 2100; based on current trends, the International Energy Agency predicts that temperatures will 2.6°C (4.7°F) above preindustrial levels by 2100. **Thus far**, pledges have been to **speed the transition to electric vehicles** and end the sale of internal combustion engines in cars by 2040, **eliminate deforestation by 2030**, and **curb methane emissions**. The **draft communique**, released on Wednesday, November 10, calls on nations to phase out coal and end fossil fuel subsidies, recognizes the need for “significantly enhanced support for developing country parties” in addition to the \$100 billion annually already promised, directs countries to offer more ambitious plans to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, and, for the first time, acknowledges “loss and damage,” which would have historically large polluters pay developing countries for damage incurred from global warming those countries did not cause.

A Big, BIF Win and the Way forward on BBB

In early November, the House (finally) passed the **bipartisan infrastructure deal (BIF)**, sending the legislation to President Biden’s desk to be signed into law. **13 House Republicans joined 215 Democrats** in supporting the legislation that passed the Senate months ago in a **69 to 30 vote**. The passage of one of his domestic policy priorities hands President Biden a political win and he intends to **travel the country** to sell it to the American public. After tense negotiations within her conference and a series of stops-and-starts on the House floor, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi struck an agreement within the Democratic Caucus to allow for a vote on final passage on the BIF while setting up consideration of the **Build Back Better** (BBB) plan, an approximately \$2 trillion “reconciliation” bill that expands social and climate policies. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) will now provide a **cost estimate (“score”)** for BBB and report back to the House, setting up consideration for late November. The BIF provides a trillion dollars to fix crumbling roads and bridges, expands access to broadband, and invests in clean energy, transit and other public works. Specifically, the **legislation** will provide: \$110 billion for roads, bridges and major infrastructure projects; \$11 billion for transportation safety; \$39 billion to modernize public transit; \$65 billion to improve the nation’s broadband infrastructure; \$17 billion in port infrastructure and \$25 billion for airports; \$7.5 billion for zero- and low-emission buses and ferries as well as \$7.5 billion for a nationwide network of plug-in electric vehicle chargers; \$65 billion to rebuild the electric grid; \$55 billion to upgrade water infrastructure; and \$50 billion for making power and water systems more resilient.

Many Looming Deadlines for Lawmakers

Earlier in the fall, Congress temporarily delayed dealing with expiring government programs and legislation needed to carry out the most basic functions of government by passing short-term extensions. Those issues now return as lawmakers must, again, consider legislation to fund the government, raise the debt limit, and renew highway funds. The pivotal date is December 3, when government funding expires. In late October, Congress passed a **temporary spending**

[measure](#), known as a continuing resolution (CR), to allow the House and Senate to complete their appropriations work. The House has passed 10 out of 12 appropriations bills while the Senate has passed none—it is all but certain that there will be another CR, the only question is whether it will be a short-term measure or whether Congress will take the threat of a government shutdown off the table until after next year’s mid-term elections. Increasing the debt limit was also delayed through a stopgap measure and action to either raise the debt limit or suspend it will be required as soon as December. When the last fiscal cliff approached, [current](#) and [former Treasury Secretaries](#) warned of the devastating economic consequences of default. In the end, enough Senate Republicans joined Senate Democrats to raise the debt ceiling and allow the government to cover its expenses. [Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell has said there will be no such support](#) from his caucus this time and is insisting that Democrats raise the debt limit through the budget reconciliation process.

An Off-Year Shot Across the Bow for Democrats

Voters in several states went to the polls in early November for the first elections since Joe Biden was sworn in as President. These elections were closely watched as they offered the first tangible indication of support for the President’s agenda and may serve as an indication of public sentiment in advance of next year’s mid-term elections. Of particular importance were the gubernatorial races in Virginia, where [former Governor Terry McAuliffe was defeated by Republican Glenn Youngkin](#), and New Jersey, where [Democratic incumbent Governor Phil Murphy barely held off a challenge by Republican challenger, Jack Ciattarelli](#). President Biden won both states by 10 and 16 points, respectively, so this does not portend well for Democrats prospects next November. Expect debate within the Democratic Party over whether this signals that the party should pursue a more progressive agenda or tack back to a more moderate course.

Reducing Transatlantic Tax and Tariff Tensions

On the margins of the G20 in Rome, European Commission President von der Leyen and President Biden agreed to a set of measures intended to reboot the transatlantic relationship. The Presidents [agreed to end a dispute](#) over U.S. steel and aluminum tariffs [initially imposed by former President Donald Trump](#) in 2018, removing an irritant in transatlantic trade relations. The arrangement also ends [retaliatory tariffs imposed by the EU on a range of American products](#). In October, the United States announced it would suspend the threat to impose punitive duties on five European countries for the imposition of Digital Services Taxes (DST) on American corporations. Washington will allow the UK, Austria, France, Italy, Spain to bring their tax regimes into compliance with the new, broader, international tax accord negotiated at the OECD and agreed to at the G20. These moves follow earlier efforts to reduce tension in the transatlantic trade partnership such as resolving the long-standing [aircraft subsidies dispute](#) and the creation of a bilateral [Trade and Technology Council](#) to coordinate policy on a range of high tech issues.

Personnel Updates

Department of Commerce – **Kathi Vidal** is the nominee for undersecretary for intellectual property and director of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. **Alan Davidson** is the nominee to lead the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).

Department of Defense – **Dr. Ravi Chaudry** has been nominated as assistant secretary of the Air Force for installations, energy and the environment.

Department of Health and Human Services – **Robert Califf** is expected to be nominated as commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration. **Dr. Francis Collins**, director of the National Institutes of Health, is stepping down.

Department of State – The following ambassadorial nominations have been confirmed: **Cindy McCain** for the UN Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome; **Victoria Kennedy** for Austria; **Thomas Udall** for New Zealand; and **Jeff Flake** for Turkey. **James O'Brien** is the nominee for coordinator for sanctions policy. **Zalmay Khalizad**, special envoy for Afghanistan, has resigned. **Sara Minkara** is the special advisor on international disability rights.

Department of Transportation – **Anne Phillips** is the nominee for administrator of the U.S. Maritime Administration.

White House – **Neera Tanden** is the new staff secretary. **Judd Devermont** is a special advisor for Africa strategy on the National Security Council staff.