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This Week in COVID-19 News

Negotiations over a new round of coronavirus response legislation have stalled, prompting President Trump to issue a series of Executive Orders. The House of Representatives recessed with no plans for votes until well after Labor Day, but with instructions from leadership to be prepared to return on short notice if negotiations restart. With less than 90 days remaining until the November general elections, the National Mining Association (NMA) remains engaged with all branches of the federal government to ensure that mining's interests are considered in the dynamic policy environment. The effort includes public communications regarding the essential nature of mining, safety actions taken by our members, and contributions being made by NMA member companies. Plus we have updates on the economy and how energy and mining markets are faring.

Biden Picks VP

Yesterday, former Vice President Joe Biden announced his choice for a running mate: California Senator Kamala Harris. A former presidential candidate herself, Senator Harris was elected to the U.S. Senate in 2016 after a career in California's judicial system serving in the Alameda County District Attorney's Office, being elected as San Francisco's District Attorney in 2004, and being elected as California's Attorney General in 2010. Since her election to the U.S. Senate, Senator Harris has been involved in limited mining issues, wilderness designations and environment and energy policy issues. On October 7, Senator Harris is expected to join Vice President Mike Pence in Salt Lake City for the vice presidential debate.

Update on COVID-19 Relief Legislation

On Saturday, President Trump issued four executive orders to provide economic relief during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This includes extending federal unemployment aid at a reduced rate of \$400 per week (with a \$300 federal contribution), reinstating a moratorium on evictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, extending student loan payment relief through the end of the year, and deferring payroll tax payments for individuals below an earnings threshold of \$100,000. These actions signed by the President will only cover four areas, which left out many priorities in the broad Democratic and Republican stimulus proposals, and followed unsuccessful attempts between the White House and congressional negotiators to reach an agreement to compromise legislation between the House-passed HEROES Act and Senate-introduced HEALS Act. Major differences continue to impede progress in further negotiations including items like liability protection, continued funding of the Paycheck Protection Program and additional stimulus checks.

It's unclear if lawmakers will attempt to make a deal later in August or wait until they are scheduled to return in September. House and Senate leadership have advised members that if negotiations continue and a deal is reached, they should be prepared to return to Washington and will be given at least 24 hours' notice before they are called back to session for votes.

Support for Mineral Provisions in the HEALS Act

The NMA continues its efforts to advocate in favor of strong, bipartisan minerals permitting reform provisions in Congress, most recently included in the Senate's Health, Economic Assistance, Liability Protection, and Schools (HEALS) Act. Last week, [NMA urged Congressional leadership](#) – along with all members of the House and Senate – to support inclusion of key HEALS Act mineral provisions in the final COVID-19 relief package currently being discussed. These provisions will help rebuild the supply chains for the very industries driving America's economic recovery forward. Twenty-five members of Congress also [advocated](#) for NMA's position in support of the minerals language in order to help support America's economic renewal and address our nation's glaring supply chain vulnerabilities. Whether it is the Senate energy package, the House or Senate National Defense Authorization Act, or the HEALS Act, NMA will continue to seek out bipartisan opportunities advocate for the inclusion strong minerals permitting reform legislation.

Senate Carbon Capture Field Hearing

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee next week will hold a field hearing in Gillette, WY examining carbon capture and storage (CCS). The hearing, titled "Energy and Environmental Innovation: Wyoming's Leadership in Using and Storing Carbon Dioxide Emissions," will be held on August 19 at 10:00 AM MT at the Wyoming Integrated Test Center. Witnesses include Jason Beggar, Managing Director of the Wyoming Integrated Test Center; Dr. Holly Krutka, Executive Director of the School of Energy Resources at the University of Wyoming; and Dr. Marcius Extavour, Executive Director of NRG COSIA Carbon XPRIZE. The hearing will not be livestreamed. Video will be uploaded to <http://epw.senate.gov> at a later date.

NMA has been a longtime advocate for additional funding and deployment of CCS technology, including support for [the USE IT Act](#), which offers federal funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for innovative technology to transform carbon dioxide (CO₂) into new economic opportunities and create an EPA CO₂ utilization

research and development program. Additionally, NMA continues to promote increased funding for the Department of Energy (DOE) Fossil Energy Research and Development and Coal CCS & Power Systems program to continue the vital research being conducted on technologies necessary to improve the environmental performance of our nation's vast coal resources. The NMA is working with the committee to prepare for the hearing.

Department of the Interior Proposes Revisions to Coal Valuation Regulations

Last week, the Department of the Interior released the [prepublication version](#) of updates to the Office of Natural Resources Revenues' regulations governing valuation of coal produced from federal and Indian land. The proposal is intended to address some of the legal infirmities to the 2016 valuation rule that NMA has identified in its ongoing court challenge to that rule, as well as other changes to provide additional regulatory clarity. The NMA will be developing comments on the proposal under the 60-day comment period.

NMA and Third-Party Voices

The NMA and its third-parties continue to work with reporters and place editorials across the country on the importance of our industry to the country and economy.

NMA worked with the [**National Journal**](#) on a story covering bipartisan support for U.S. action to shore up supply chains for critical minerals, which noted that "the mineral issue is poised to stay on the policy front-burner in the months ahead."

[**NMA's Count on Coal blog**](#) focused on continued voter concerns about rising electricity prices.

[**MSN.com**](#) (USA), [**Fort Myers News Press**](#) (FL), [**Naples Daily News**](#) (FL), [**MSN.com**](#) (USA), [**Arizona Capitol Times**](#) (AZ) and [**The Clermont Sun**](#) (OH), [**Waco Tribune**](#) (TX),

[Salem News](#) (OH), [East Liverpool Review](#) (OH), [Lisbon Morning Journal](#) (OH) and the [Johnstown Tribune Democrat](#) (PA) carried an op-ed by Matthew Kandrach, the president of Consumer Action for a Strong Economy (CASE), in which he argues that we must support coal to keep energy affordable for the sake of Americans struggling with household bills.

Economic Impact

The U.S. Labor Department reported the economy [added 1.8 million jobs](#) in July, while the unemployment rate fell to 10.2 percent from 11.1 percent the previous month.

The Bureau of Economic Analysis reported personal income [grew by 7.3 percent](#) in the second quarter compared with the first, buoyed by government spending.

The Wall Street Journal reported consumer credit card debt [has declined sharply](#).

Federal Reserve of New York reported total household debt declined for the [first time since 2014](#).

Association of American Railroads reported combined carload and intermodal volume [declined 9.3 percent](#) in July compared with the same month last year.

National Retail Federation reported imports at major retail container ports this year are expected to be the [lowest in four years](#).

Energy and Mining News

[International Mining](#) and [MarketScreener](#) reported Usibelli Coal Mine has become CORESafety certified.

[E&E News reported](#) that MSHA is keeping track of COVID-19 cases reported to the

agency. It is not an official list it shares with the public, but as of July 25, the list included 136 mine workers, according to an MSHA email to E&E.

S&P Global reported that “Coal-fired power generation in PJM [could see brief 2021 comeback.](#)”

The Energy Information Agency [reported](#) that coal production increased 2.9% over the prior week’s estimate but was 28.2% lower than the production estimate in the same week in 2019. Coal production year-to-date totaled 306.6 million short tons, 27.1% lower than the comparable year-to-date coal production in 2019.

The Midcontinent Independent System Operator added a new affiliate sector to its Advisory Committee that will provide formal representation [for the coal sector](#), a position advocated for by NMA and coalition allies.

[Axios reported](#) that low income households are struggling to pay their energy bills during the pandemic, according to recent Indiana University research.

[The World Gold Council reported](#) in its recent Q2 Gold Demand Trends Report that “the COVID-19 pandemic was again the main influence on the gold market in Q2, severely curtailing consumer demand while providing support for investment.”

[Politico](#) reported on the Pentagon’s quest to reduce U.S. reliance on rare earth minerals from China, and what it is doing to make that happen.

[Forbes](#) reported on China’s rare earth supply threat to Lockheed Martin last month. Such threats reinforce the U.S. and global need to re-shore and diversify.

NMA COVID-19 Resources

The NMA team is maintaining a comprehensive suite of online resources for [Coronavirus Assistance and Response](#). Resources include both [health, safety and business](#)

[assistance](#) for NMA members and a chronicle of the American [mining industry's response to the current crisis](#).

Tell Us About Your COVID-19 Response

We are continually gathering information about how the COVID-19 crisis is affecting our members. Information will be used in discussions with policymakers and decision makers at all levels of government and will help illustrate how mining is giving back to the communities where we live and work. Please [contact Ashley Burke](#) with on-going accounts of your responses to the global pandemic.

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