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## **You Told Us to Return to Office, And Then You Sold The Office!**

### *GSA's Mass Lease Cancellations*

It's not easy to return to the office when there is no office to return to. The General Services Administration, as a result of DOGE's pledged budget cuts, has cancelled a total of nearly 750 leases for federal agencies. A few Corps offices were caught in the crossfire. The Jacksonville, Charleston and Chicago Corps offices will either be renewing their leases, moving offices entirely, or find that they are without an office. District leadership has now made it a priority to identify new digs by August 31.

## **Firings, Layoffs Affect Coastal Interests**

The "fork-in-the-road" deferred resignation offer has caused 1,000 of FEMA's 17,000 employees to say they want to leave the agency as well as an unknown number of workers at the Corps of Engineers. Hundreds have been fired at NOAA, including employees of the National Weather Service. The Administration said it wants to cut EPA's budget by 65 percent, but we haven't heard reports of firings at that agency yet, while Federal employee unions and others have filed dozens of legal suits to reverse the Administration's workforce policies. In addition, all information related to the Community Disaster Resilient Zone program has been removed from FEMA's website, and grantees report that the on-again, off-again Federal spending freeze is affecting their receiving Federal grant funds. Ironically, we also see reports that the Corps is still hiring for hundreds of unfilled positions while its probationary workers face the potential to be fired any day. Thanks to our subscribers who provided some of this information. Any additional details (anonymity guaranteed) should be sent to [howard@waterlog.net](mailto:howard@waterlog.net).

## **March 14<sup>th</sup> Shutdown Imminent**

Speaker Johnson has a slim majority and can't have any of his members defect, but he often has trouble getting 1 or 2 votes from party hardliners. Democrats, who are angry at Trump and Musk's federal workforce cuts, refuse to make progress on a spending deal unless the President's powers are curtailed. Minority leader Hakeem Jeffries says with Republicans in the majority, it is their responsibility to pass a spending bill. Republicans are largely ok with the Trump and Musk cuts, while Democrats seethe. With some Republicans not willing to back the proposed spending bills and no Democrats willing to provide votes for a budget deal, it's not looking like a spending deal will be made by March 14<sup>th</sup>. Instead, a stopgap spending bill may add time to the clock – Likely the end of March.

## **FY26 Appropriations Process Underway (?)**

Although the President's budget has still not been reached and members have no guidance on FY26 spending, some members are soliciting earmark requests anyway.

## **WRDA 2024 Public Comments Requested**

The Corps has issued a notice that it wants public comments on which sections of WRDA 2024 should receive Corps implementation guidance and what that guidance should contain. The comment period ends on April 28<sup>th</sup>. Additionally, the OASA(CW) and the Corps will host a series of virtual public listening sessions where participants can provide input. Those sessions will take place at 2-4pm Eastern on March 12<sup>th</sup>, March 26<sup>th</sup>, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, and April 9<sup>th</sup>. For more information, see the public notice [here](#).

## **News Briefs**

If the President's recently imposed tariffs on Canada, Mexico, and China, as well as the tariffs those countries have imposed in retaliation, change U.S. trading patterns, one of the interests likely to be affected will be U.S. ports who fear that fewer ships will be arriving....Trump has reversed the Biden administration's initiative to revise how the costs and benefits of proposed regulations should be weighed. The pullback is part of the President's order geared toward slashing 10 existing rules for every new proposed rule....At a February 25<sup>th</sup> House hearing, Chief of Engineers General Butch Graham testified. After noting that "Our current on schedule rate across our entire portfolio is 73%....that's unacceptable. My pledge to this Committee is that I will only sign chief's reports where I'm convinced that the that we've got the engineering right with sufficient maturity, our second control will focus areas get the project management, right, we must improve our ability to stay in control of our projects by setting realistic schedules"....Finally, the Trump administration has revoked its National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) implementing rule and

replaced it with guidance that directs agencies to rely on their individual NEPA regulations, significantly increasing uncertainty for developers and others awaiting federal permits and other approvals.

## Coastal Legislation Update

Of the 40 bills we currently track that have been introduced this Congress, some are starting to get hearings in committee, and we expect to be able to report floor action in next month's *WaterLog*. Of the recent bills dropped in the hopper, S. 773 (Sen. Gillibrand, D-NY), reauthorizes the Long Island Sound programs; H.R. 501 (Rep. Edwards, R-NC), Promoting Public Buildings Act; H.R. 517 (Rep. Kustoff, R-TN), Filing Relief for Disaster Management Costs Modernization Act; and H.R. 744 (Rep. Neguse, D-CO), Disaster Management Modernization Act. The latter two bills have already received committee approval to move to the House floor. You can see the full list of bills [here](#).

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