

DAILY NEWS CLIPS

FEDERAL NEWS CLIPS

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POLITICO MORNING TRANSP0

By Burgess Everett and Adam Snyder

Excerpts from the Politico Daily Transportation Blog

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Private meetings galore on transpo bill - Rahall to offer 'Buy America' motion - Blumenauer prefers shorter bill - Cravaack: Planes most vulnerable on ground

WHAT HAPPENS BEHIND CLOSED DOORS... The closed-doors talks keep coming. Conference Chairwoman Barbara Boxer is supposed to sit down with Vice Chairman John Mica today, and House GOP conferees are huddling at an undisclosed location. No word yet on if pizza and smoothies (or hoagies) will make an appearance at the Mica-Boxer powwow.

Mica said the GOP meeting will let him get some preliminary reactions: “This is my first chance to get feedback on what they’re hearing. You know if there are problems, they surface around here pretty quickly. There’s nothing I’ve seen so far,” he told reporters.

It’s a busy schedule for all — Boxer has a sit-down with Reps. John Duncan and Peter DeFazio scheduled as well. Duncan told MT he wasn’t sure who had requested the meeting, but “they asked me to come and I told them I would come. And I’m going to listen to what they have to say.” DeFazio indicated things will still be preliminary today but will pick up quickly after next week’s House recess, with staff meeting twice a day now. “They will have highlighted those things that are problematic, bring it back to the members, and we’ll have another members meeting.”

Summary of the last week, by a House conferee: “We haven’t really gotten into the meaty stuff yet. The staff-level negotiations are basically going through the Senate bill and the House bill and familiarizing themselves with each side’s position and start working from there,” freshman Larry Bucshon told MT.

RAHALL TRIES TO BUY AMERICA: Today, top T&I Dem Nick Rahall will offer a motion to instruct transportation conferees. The procedural motion — which doesn’t technically force conferees into any certain changes — asks for inclusion of his “Buy America” bill that would strengthen requirements that projects be built with U.S. steel and other goods. He’ll offer the motion today and it will be up for a vote today or tomorrow, according to an aide. Unlimited motions to instruct conferees are now allowed on

the floor — so Rahall's likely won't be the last. Text of the motion: <http://bit.ly/KQpiJi>. Summary: <http://bit.ly/KQpmcb>

GROUP WORK: Sen. Jim Inhofe said Tuesday's huddle with Rep. Fred Upton, Sen. John Hoeven and Sen. David Vitter is just one of many informal confabs going down daily. "The one thing we all have in common at that meeting is we all want a highway bill and we want a pipeline." He's also getting a little tired of this line of questioning: Choose one: 1) transportation bill; 2) Keystone pipeline. "Obviously the pipeline is something that I feel very strongly about. People are always asking me questions." About a hypothetical scenario? "And I won't do that." That said, Inhofe sees some upside if Keystone lingers past the transportation conference, especially with Obama trying to "cozy up" to big oil. Burgess has more for Pros: <http://politico.pro/Kzt4aC>

The Keystone delegation: "There's three of us on the Senate side," Hoeven said of himself, Vitter and Inhofe rapping on the pipeline. "And Fred [Upton]'s leading it on the House side." Hoeven's the specific Senate GOP point man on Keystone, Vitter's spearheading the RESTORE Act and Inhofe is at the top of the chain, the North Dakotan told MT.

KEEP IT SHORT: Conferee Earl Blumenauer is hitting back against all the talk of doing "as long a term bill as possible," as many pols have said they want for the transportation bill. We'll let the bowtied Oregonian take it from here: "I think we need the time to be able to engage a reelected president or a new administration, and it's likely to play a role in deficit reduction. That's what happened with Reagan in '82 and Clinton in '93, and a reelected Obama with all these expiring provisions, I think it makes more sense to do it then, especially if we have two years of stability to move it forward. I don't see this conference being able to move beyond that."

Fellow Oregon Dem and conferee DeFazio agreed: "Given what's available for funding, I don't know that we could go much longer than a year and a half. ...We hope that the next election brings sane people who believe in investing in America, putting people back to work and competing with the rest of the world. If we elect more flat-earthers, we're screwed."

'Broad and interesting': Blumenauer might technically be a conferee for the bill's funding sections — but he's still talking transport quite a bit, he said. "I'm spending a lot of time talking to people about that," he told MT, noting routine meetings with a wide variety of transportation stakeholders. "There's a broad and interesting coalition of people who care deeply about getting this platform for the next two construction cycles."

SMOKE BREAK: Smoke 'em if you've got 'em — before the taxman comes. Tucked into the Senate's transportation bill is a provision that would reclassify tobacco shops that rent "roll your own" cigarette machines as manufacturers. Why? To collect more tax revenue. Pros get more from Kathryn: <http://politico.pro/KvkV8c> **NOTE: This is a link to the article from yesterday's clips.**

FLAME RETARDANT INDUSTRY: USING INDUSTRY TACTICS TO PROMOTE THE ABESTOS OF OUR TIME

By Michael Green, Executive Director, Center for Environmental Health
The Huffington Post
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When I think about the connection between greed, lies, and unnecessary toxic health threats, asbestos or cigarettes jump to mind. Everyone knows how the tobacco industry denied the health risks of cigarettes for decades and continued to lie about the scientifically proven link between smoking and cancer and emphysema for decades, even after their own studies demonstrated the links. The asbestos story was remarkably similar, with industry recklessly deploying the cancer-causing chemical in our homes, workplaces, and even schools long after it knew that asbestos was killing people.

But until last week, many people had not heard about fire retardant chemicals, substances that pose serious health threats and that are made by companies who are using the tobacco industry's playbook to maintain their profits at the expense of our children's and families' health.

In a stunning four-part series last week, the Chicago Tribune found that the three leading makers of fire retardant chemicals have for decades used deception and phony "citizen's groups" to mislead the public, legislators and regulatory agencies about the efficacy and safety of their harmful products. In perhaps the most shocking revelation, the Tribune investigation exposed how the companies indirectly financed a prominent burn doctor who lied to state legislators about child burn victims, in order to falsely portray fire retardants as life-saving substances.

Professor Arlene Blum, a visiting scholar in chemistry at the University of California, has called fire retardant chemicals the "asbestos of our time" because exposure is widespread and can result in devastating health problems. She notes that exposure to flame retardant chemicals is associated with "reduced IQ in children, reduced fertility, thyroid impacts, undescended testicles in infants (leading to a higher cancer risk), and decreases in sperm quality and function," among other health hazards.

The Tribune stories show that for decades the fire retardant companies have been using the tobacco industry's tactics -- and even hired veterans of the tobacco industry's efforts and partnered with the cigarette industry to carry out their dirty tricks campaigns.

According to the Tribune, Dr. David Heimbach, a prominent burn doctor, lied in testimony to California legislators about an infant who died from burn injuries to falsely demonstrate that the baby girl could have been saved by fire retardants. When reporters confronted Heimbach with evidence of his lies, the doctor stated that the "anecdotes" he related were not "absolutely true" but were justified "because I wasn't under oath."

Dr. Heimbach acknowledged that he has repeatedly testified about the benefits of fire retardants as a paid consultant for Citizens for Fire Safety (CFS). As the Tribune found (and as CEH wrote about in 2010), this industry front group includes no citizens and cares nothing about fire safety. The phony "nonprofit" consists only of the three chemical companies that make the majority of fire retardants sold: Albemarle, Chemtura and ICL Industrial Products. In addition to funding Heimbach's lies, the Tribune exposed how the companies:

- Lied about fire fighter groups, federal regulators, and the American Burn Association support of CFS;
- Misled fire marshals to enlist them as unwitting opponents of new fire safety rules;
- Distorted science, misrepresented research, and used bogus science to falsely demonstrate the "benefits" of their products; and
- Partnered with big tobacco to counter burn victims who have advocated for fire-safe cigarettes that would be less likely to ignite furniture.

California's 1975 furniture flammability standard, called TB 117, plays prominently in this national debate because producers of furniture, baby products, and many other everyday items use massive amounts of fire retardants in order to meet this state standard. CEH has actively worked for years to revise this outdated standard and to eliminate all unnecessary uses of fire retardant chemicals. Our policy director attended the hearing where she heard Heimbach's lies -- and she witnessed state legislators buying into the lies, as their committee voted down the reform bill 8-1.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has found that flame retardants in household furniture are not effective, and has questioned the widespread use of flame retardants in household furniture that can pose unnecessary health risks. In 2008, CPSC proposed a draft standard for furniture flammability that focuses on making upholstery resistant to smoldering cigarettes without chemical retardants, since cigarettes are the largest cause of furniture fires. But until the proposed rule is finalized -- a process that can take several years -- California's outdated regulation remains the de facto national standard.

In response to the Tribune series, Illinois Senator Richard Durbin has called on the CPSC to move quickly on finalizing its proposed rule. It's time to end our reliance on this modern-day asbestos, and end the flame retardant industry's tobacco-inspired lies.

Originally posted here: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michaelgreen/flame-retardant-chemicals_b_1520332.html