



August 12, 2026

Where's Congress?

Every August, Washington, D.C. quiets down as Congress takes its month-long recess, a tradition allowing members and staff to return to their home states and districts. This break provides opportunities to meet constituents, attend local events, or campaign.

While legislative business typically pauses, Congress may reconvene for urgent matters like disaster relief or major legislation, ensuring critical issues are addressed despite the recess.

The August recess traces its roots back centuries, driven partly by Washington's oppressive summer climate before air conditioning arrived in 1929. Vice President John Nance Garner famously quipped, "No good legislation ever comes out of Washington after June," capturing the pre-recess exodus sentiment. The tradition was formalized by the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970, which mandated the recess for odd-numbered years. Though the 1970 law applied only to odd-numbered years, by the 1990s, the August recess became an annual practice.

If you have ever tuned into C-SPAN during August, you might see the House and Senate convene every few days for a "pro-forma" session. In the Senate, this is typically done to prevent presidential recess appointments. The House conducts a similar session to keep the bodies technically in session without conducting substantive business. These sessions maintain continuity while members are away.

Lawmakers will return to their official duties in mid to late September.

Congress Advances Grid and Ratepayer Protection Measures

As electricity demand from data centers continues to grow, policymakers are increasingly focused on protecting residential and commercial customers from related infrastructure costs. Last month, the House Energy and Commerce Committee unanimously advanced the Ratepayer Protection Act, which would require states to consider a federal standard directing data centers to pay the full cost of new generation and transmission upgrades needed to serve them. Companion legislation has also been introduced in the Senate.

The bill provides a more enforceable policy approach than the Administration's voluntary Ratepayer Protection Pledge, which asks technology companies and utilities to limit the impact of data center development on consumer electricity rates.

The proposal complements the High-Capacity Grid Act, which seeks to increase the capacity of the existing transmission system through advanced technologies and reconductoring. Together, the bills reflect a broader effort to address rapidly rising electricity demand while expanding grid capacity and limiting cost shifts to other customers.

NAED supports policies that accelerate deployment of modern grid technologies and strengthen transmission capacity. If further congressional action occurs, movement will resume this fall.

At the Races - Redistricting Expands the 2026 House Battlefield

Political handicappers report that House Republicans are expanding their list of targeted Democratic-held seats as newly drawn congressional maps reshape the battlefield ahead of the 2026 midterm elections. The National Republican Congressional Committee now identifies 36 Democratic-held districts as potential pickup opportunities, including a number of newly added seats in states where redistricting produced more Republican-leaning boundaries.

Redistricting, however, does not erase the broader political environment. Historically, the President's party has lost House seats in midterm elections. The new maps may help offset those headwinds, but they are unlikely to determine control of a narrowly divided House on their own.

The outcome will depend on a relatively small number of competitive districts, as well as candidate quality, turnout, and the national mood. The expanded field of competitive races could also make legislative activity more difficult as vulnerable members devote more attention to district politics and campaign positioning. For associations and businesses, the uncertainty reinforces the importance of maintaining relationships in both parties and preparing for possible changes in committee leadership and congressional priorities.

State Watch – NAED Weighs in on Minnesota EPR Implementation

NAED recently submitted comments to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency regarding implementation of the state's Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) law. The law requires producers to finance and manage recycling programs for covered packaging and paper products. Detailed requirements are still being developed through rulemaking.

NAED urged the agency to ensure that electrical distributors are not treated as manufacturers or responsible producers simply because they warehouse, transport, resell, repackage, private-label, or deliver products made by others. As we have consistently argued, EPR obligations should remain with the entity that controls the product's original packaging, branding, design, or importation.

The comments also requested clear definitions, reasonable documentation standards, protections against duplicative obligations, and recognition of the practical limits distributors face in obtaining packaging data from manufacturers. NAED will continue engaging as Minnesota develops proposed regulations and opens additional opportunities for public comment.

Trump Administration Foreshadows Continued Deregulation Agenda

The Trump administration recently released its 2026 Unified Agenda, a semi-annual endeavor that outlines planned regulatory changes and revisions. Most impactful to NAED members are actions on environmental, energy, labor, and permitting policy.

The agenda includes efforts to streamline Clean Water Act reviews and expand the use of nationwide permits. These changes could help accelerate grid, data center builds, manufacturing, warehouse, and other infrastructure projects.

OSHA is also reconsidering requirements for fixed ladders over 24 feet. The proposal could remove the 2036 deadline for retrofitting existing ladders with ladder-safety or personal fall-arrest systems, allowing older ladders to remain in service until the end of their useful life. This could reduce unnecessary facility costs for members while preserving existing maintenance and fall-protection responsibilities.

The Labor Department also plans changes affecting independent contractors, joint-employer liability, and compensable work time. These rules could influence distributors that use temporary workers, staffing companies, independent delivery drivers, or employees performing pre- and post-shift tasks through mobile devices.

Finally, the Department of Energy is reconsidering efficiency standards for products such as battery chargers, external power supplies, and other equipment. These changes could affect product availability, inventory planning, manufacturer costs, and customer demand. NAED will continue monitoring these actions and will engage where distributor operations or supply chains could be affected.

SBA Administrator visits Patriot Industries

Patriot Industries recently hosted SBA Administrator Kelly Loeffler alongside Rep. John McGuire (R-VA) to discuss small business growth, domestic manufacturing, and the impact of recent federal tax policies found in the Working Families Tax Cut Act. Loeffler emphasized the role small manufacturers play in rebuilding U.S. industrial capacity, and Rep. McGuire pointed to provisions affecting overtime, tips, and Social Security income as examples of policies intended to increase take-home pay and support workers.

The visit represents another important point of engagement between Patriot Industries, NAED, and federal policymakers. Earlier this year, Patriot Industries President Tom Click credited NAED's government relations efforts with giving companies like Patriot opportunities to engage policymakers and influence legislation affecting business growth.

Washington Wire readers may recall that Rep. McGuire also recognized NAED during a House floor speech several months ago, further raising the electrical distribution industry's visibility in Congress. His latest visit to Patriot reinforces the value of sustained member engagement with lawmakers and demonstrates how local industry relationships can translate into broader advocacy opportunities in Washington. Congratulations, Tom, Sarah, and the whole Patriot team!

NAED can help you build relationships with policymakers. If you are interested in hosting a member of Congress at one of your locations, or want to get more involved in our advocacy efforts, please reach out to Bud DeFlaviis at bud@naed.org to get started.