

America

'Pursuing multiple paths'

Biden ends GOP infrastructure talks, but new group emerges

WASHINGTON, June 9, (AP): President Joe Biden ended talks with a group of Republican senators on a big infrastructure package on Tuesday and started reaching out to senators from both parties in a new effort toward bipartisan compromise, setting a summer deadline for Congress to pass his top legislative priority.



Capito

The president is walking away from talks with lead Republican negotiator Sen Shelley Moore Capito after the two spoke Tuesday, but would welcome her in the new bipartisan group, according to an administrative official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private negotiations.

Shortly after the Biden-Capito talks collapsed, 10 senators huddled late Tuesday over pizza — five Republicans, five Democrats — emerging after three hours with some optimism their new effort could create a viable path forward, said a person familiar with the closed-door talks and granted anonymity to discuss them.

At the same time, with anxiety running high as time slips by, Democrats are laying the groundwork to pass some or all of the ambitious package on their own. Biden conferred Tuesday with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer about launching the budget resolution process for Senate votes in July, the White House said.

Committed

"The President is committed to moving his economic legislation through Congress this summer, and is pursuing multiple paths to get this done," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said in a statement.

The breakdown in the White House's efforts with GOP senators comes after weeks of prolonged infrastructure talks between the president and Capito as the two sides failed to broker the divide over the scope of Biden's sweeping infrastructure investment and how to pay for it.

The Republican senators offered a \$928 billion proposal, which included about \$330 billion in new spending — but not as much as Biden's \$1.7 trillion investment proposal for rebuilding the nation's roads, bridges, highways and other infrastructure, including Veterans Affairs hospitals and care centers.

Biden has proposed raising the corporate tax rate from 21% to 28%, a nonstarter for Republicans, and rejected the GOP senators' suggestion of tapping unspent COVID-19 aid money to fund the new infrastructure spending.

In a statement, Capito said she was disappointed Biden ended the talks, but also expressed interest in ongoing bipartisan work.

"While I appreciate President Biden's willingness to devote so much time and effort to these negotiations, he ultimately

chose not to accept the very robust and targeted infrastructure package, and instead, end our discussions," she said. "However, this does not mean bipartisanship isn't feasible."

As Biden aims for a compromise deal, he has begun reaching out to other senators, including Republican Sen. Bill Cassidy of Louisiana and two key centrist Democrats, Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Sen Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona, whose votes will be crucial in the evenly split Senate.

Those senators receiving phone calls from Biden were among the group of 10 assembled with Sinema and Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, late Tuesday in Portman's office for what was described as a productive meeting, the person familiar with the session said.

Portman and Sinema have been engaged for months with Sen Mitt Romney, R-Utah, and Sen Susan Collins, R-Maine, on a sizable infrastructure proposal that is expected to include proposed ways to pay for it.

Expanded

The senators' group has expanded in recent weeks to include the others from both parties. Romney has described it a "back burner" group, in case the administration's talks with the GOP senators faltered.

Psaki said the president urged the senators in his conversations to continue their work "to develop a bipartisan proposal that he hopes will be more responsive to the country's pressing infrastructure needs." Biden tapped Cabinet and White House aides to meet with the senators in person.

Ahead of Biden's announcement, the White House had also spoken to other lawmakers, including from the House.

Rep Josh Gottheimer, D-NJ, and Rep Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa, the co-chairs of the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus, spoke late Monday with Brian Deese, director of the White House National Economic Council, about bipartisan efforts to reach an infrastructure deal, according to an aide who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private conversations.

The Problem Solvers group has agreed to \$761.8 billion in new spending over eight years as part of \$1.2 trillion plan, according to a draft obtained late Tuesday by The Associated Press. The one-page draft does not include any proposed ways to pay for the package.

Gottheimer is also working with Cassidy and Sinema from the senators' group, the aide said.

With the narrowly split House and the 50-50 Senate, the White House faces political challenges pushing its priorities through Congress with Democratic votes alone. Biden's party holds a slight majority in the Senate because a Vice-President Kamala Harris can break a tie.

The special budget rules could provide Biden with an alternative path, particularly in the Senate, because they allow legislation to be approved with a 51-vote threshold, rather than the 60 votes typically needed to advance a bill past a filibuster — in this case, led by Republicans against the Biden package.



President Joe Biden salutes as he steps off Marine One before boarding Air Force One upon departure, Wednesday, June 9, 2021, at Andrews Air Force Base, Md. Biden is embarking on the first overseas trip of his term, and is eager to reassert the United States on the world stage, steadying European allies deeply shaken by his predecessor and pushing democracy as the only bulwark to the rising forces of authoritarianism. (AP)

US president to meet Putin

Biden to assure allies, during 1st overseas trip

WASHINGTON, June 9, (AP): Embarking on the first overseas trip of his term, President Joe Biden is eager to reassert the United States on the world stage, steadying European allies deeply shaken by his predecessor and pushing democracy as the only bulwark to rising forces of authoritarianism.

Biden has set the stakes for his eight-day trip in sweeping terms, believing the West must publicly demonstrate it can compete economically with China as the world emerges from the coronavirus pandemic.

Before boarding Air Force One for Wednesday's flight, Biden told reporters the trip is about making clear to the leaders of China and Russia that the United States and Europe "are tight."

Building toward his trip-ending summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Biden will aim to reassure European capitals that the United States can once again be counted on as a dependable partner to thwart Moscow's aggression both on their eastern front and their internet battlefields.

The trip will be far more about messaging than specific actions or deals. And the paramount priority for Biden is to convince the world that his Democratic administration is not just a fleeting deviation in the trajectory of an American foreign policy that many allies fear irrevocably drifted toward a more transac-

tional outlook under former President Donald Trump.

"The trip, at its core, will advance the fundamental thrust of Joe Biden's foreign policy," said national security adviser Jake Sullivan, "to rally the world's democracies to tackle the great challenges of our time."

Biden's to-do list is ambitious.

In their face-to-face sit-down in Geneva, Biden wants to privately pressure Putin to end myriad provocations, including cybersecurity attacks on American businesses by Russian-based hackers, the jailing of opposition leader Alexei Navalny and repeated overt and covert efforts by the Kremlin to interfere in U.S. elections.

Response

Biden is also looking to rally allies on their COVID-19 response and to urge them to coalesce around a strategy to check emerging economic and national security competitor China even as the U.S. expresses concern about Europe's economic links to Moscow. Biden also wants to nudge outlying allies, including Australia, to make more aggressive commitments to the worldwide effort to curb global warming.

The week-plus journey is a big moment for Biden, who traveled the world for decades as vice president and as chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and will now

step off Air Force One onto international soil as commander in chief. He will face world leaders still grappling with the virus and rattled by four years of Trump's inward-looking foreign policy and moves that strained longtime alliances as the Republican former president made overtures to strongmen.

Global

"In this moment of global uncertainty, as the world still grapples with a once-in-a-century pandemic," Biden wrote in a Washington Post op-ed previewing his diplomatic efforts, "this trip is about realizing America's renewed commitment to our allies and partners, and demonstrating the capacity of democracies to both meet the challenges and deter the threats of this new age."

The president first travels to Britain for a summit of the Group of Seven leaders and then Brussels for a NATO summit and a meeting with the heads of the European Union. It comes at a moment when Europeans have diminished expectations for what they can expect of U.S. leadership on the foreign stage.

Central and Eastern Europeans are desperately hoping to bind the U.S. more tightly to their security. Germany is looking to see the U.S. troop presence maintained there so it doesn't need to build up its own. France, meanwhile, has taken the tack that the U.S. can't be trusted as

it once was and that the European Union must pursue greater strategic autonomy going forward.

"I think the concern is real that the Trumpian tendencies in the U.S. could return full bore in the mid-terms or in the next presidential election," said Alexander Vershbow, a former U.S. diplomat and once deputy secretary general of NATO.

The sequencing of the trip is deliberate: Biden consulting with Western European allies for much of a week as a show of unity before his summit with Putin.

His first stop late Wednesday will be an address to U.S. troops stationed in Britain, and the next day he sits down with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson. The two men will meet a day ahead of the G-7 summit to be held above the craggy cliffs of Cornwall overlooking the Atlantic Ocean.

The most taciturn of politicians, Biden has grown frustrated by the diplomacy-via-Zoom dynamics of the pandemic and has relished the ability to again have face-to-face meetings that allow him to size up and connect with world leaders. While Biden himself is a veteran statesman, many of the world leaders he will see in England, including Johnson and French President Emmanuel Macron, took office after Biden left the vice presidency. Another, Germany's Angela Merkel, will leave office later this year.

In Briefs

UNLAWFULLY: Britain's High Court ruled Wednesday that the U.K. government acted unlawfully in awarding a contract to a company run by friends of the former top adviser to Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

In her ruling, Judge Finola O'Farrell found that a June 2020 decision by Cabinet Office minister Michael Gove to pay more than 500,000 pounds (\$700,000) to market research firm Public First "gave rise to apparent bias and was unlawful." (AP)

ACCUSED: The youth director at a Florida Panhandle church is accused of hiding a camera in a church bathroom, officials said.

David Nims, 37, who works at Calvary Baptist Church in Pensacola, was arrested on Monday and charged with video voyeurism by an adult responsible for the welfare of children under age 16, the Pensacola News Journal reported. (AP)

PROTECTING: Gunmen on a motorcycle Wednesday shot and killed two police officers assigned to protect polio vaccination workers in northwest Pakistan before fleeing, police said.

The attack happened in the district of Mardan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province as the officers returned to a police station after providing security for the polio team, said Adnan Azam, a senior police officer.

Pakistani militants often target polio teams and police assigned to protect them claiming the vaccination campaigns are a Western conspiracy to sterilize children. (AP)

Will Compete for \$1 Million in Prizes in the World's Largest Pitch Competition for EdTech Startups

Edmate Named to the GSV Cup Elite 200



Edmate has been selected as a semifinalist among 200 leading pre-seed and seed education technology startups competing to win the GSV Cup, with a prize purse valued at \$1 million. Semifinalists are recognized as top innovators in the EdTech sector, disrupting the way people teach and learn worldwide.

As part of the competition, Edmate has been invited to pitch to an esteemed panel of judges from global venture capital firms and strategic education companies at the ASU+GSV Summit taking place August 9-11 in San Diego, California, virtually. The winning contestant stands a chance to win USD 1 million in prizes.

Commenting on this achievement, Edmate Founder & CEO, Noor Boodai said, "Being shortlisted for the GSV Cup is a very crucial milestone for us. It has not only reaffirmed our faith in the fact that we are on the right path, but also motivated us even further to take Edmate to more and more educators and learners worldwide. However, this achievement would not have been possible without all the relentless hard work of our team. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for always working towards our vision to accelerate the world's transition to digital learning. I am confident this is only first of our many successes."

"Congratulations to Edmate for being named to the

GSV Cup Elite 200," said Deborah Quazzo, managing partner of GSV Ventures. "As the world moves from Before Coronavirus (B.C.) to After Disease (A.D.), we are seeing a surge of innovation in edtech -- the dawn of the age of digital learning -- driven by entrepreneurs on a mission to improve lives through education. These 'weapons of mass instruction' have the power to transform teaching and learning. Edmate was named a semifinalist in an extremely competitive contest of EdTech startups around the world and will now compete for \$1 million in non-dilutive capital and prizes."

Edmate was selected based on rigorous criteria by a panel of 152 esteemed judges from global venture capital firms and strategic education companies. The GSV Cup is powered by Google Cloud, HubSpot for Startups, HolonIQ, and GSV Ventures. Applicants were evaluated by the world's leading investors, including Accel, Alexa Fund, Brand Capital International, Epic Ventures, Founders Circle Capital, Owl Ventures and Reach Capital, among others.

The second annual GSV cup is the world's largest pitch competition for "Pre-K to Gray" early stage EdTech startups, with more than 700 startup applicants in 2021. These innovative EdTech companies help ensure that all people have

equal access to the future through technologies in early childhood, K-12, higher education, adult consumer learning, and adult enterprise learning.

Reinforcing the role of digital tools in analyzing people thoughts and interaction

KFH Activates Guide Feature on Its Instagram Account



Guide

activities and contests of interest to the public, customers and followers.

The Guide feature has a consistent content categorized into different windows, each one containing all the materials that fall under it without overlapping, which facilitates search and access process in an easy and flexible way.

KFH focuses on enhancing the role of advanced digital tools in analyzing customers' thoughts and measuring their interaction in order to be in line with their demands.

KFH is keen to be active in various electronic and social media channels, as part of a strategy to always be the closest to customers and the public, and to learn more about their interests and interact with them, as well as getting involved in different social events.

KFH's social media accounts have over one million followers which confirms the efficiency of its social media strategy. The bank also aims to target the youth segment in the first place, as they constitute the highest follow-up rate, reaching about 70% of the total followers.

As KFH's social media accounts witness a positive interaction from followers, the bank seeks to provide more innovative and creative content.

KFH is keen to invest in social media channels in distinctive ways that make it closer to its customers and the public, paving the way for customers to express their opinions and suggestions regarding the products, services, campaigns, offers and discounts offered by the bank.

Keeping up with the latest updates by digital platforms and through adopting digitization, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has become the first Kuwaiti bank to activate Instagram's Guide feature.

This comes as part of KFH efforts to reinforce communication and constructive interaction with customers by facilitating access to its content on its social media channels, and to learn more about the bank's services and products, awareness campaigns and various offers.

The new feature effectively and quickly provides customers with all information about KFH's services and events, such as e-banking solutions, awareness campaign "Diraya", community events,