

Finally, agreement in Washington, and it lasted a whole five minutes

Deal between Biden and bipartisan group of senators on infrastructure was immediately seen as fragile.

Things seemed fine in Washington for about five minutes Thursday, when President Biden and a coalition of bipartisan senators announced a pact on an infrastructure plan.

“No one got everything they wanted in this package,” said Sen. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz., in the White House driveway. “We gave some to get some.”

Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, echoed Sinema.

“We’ve agreed on the price tag, the scope, and how to pay for it,” said Collins. “It was not easy to get agreement on all three.”

But this accord is fragile. There is no bill text yet. There is a broad set of principles and pay-fors. Some outside groups are already questioning whether the calculus adds up. We probably won’t start to see formal legislative text until early July.

But the sides are trying to make this work.

And it did for about five minutes.

President Biden briefly huddled with the senators at the White House midday Thursday. It was clear that the audience with the president wasn’t another set of negotiations or even a meeting to clarify the proposal or run through particulars.

This was about a photo-op. An important photo-op when it comes to actually legislating.

Mr. Biden made a point of making a rare appearance in the White House driveway with bipartisan senators clustering around him. The president wanted to show that he was all-in with their deal.

This was not a sound byte. This was a “sight bite.” A sight bite is more powerful.

And Mr. Biden was sending a message to Democrats and Republicans by visually showing he supported this plan.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) said this week he expected to dual-track the bipartisan plan, and, a partisan, expensive, \$6 trillion plan which Democrats may pass on their own in July. Democrats could do this alone via the special budget reconciliation process which sidesteps filibusters.

BIDEN, BIPARTISAN SENATORS REACH DEAL ON \$953B INFRASTRUCTURE COMPROMISE

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., indicated she wouldn't budge until the Senate sent over the reconciliation plan — the measure Democrats will likely prefer.

"I use the word 'ain't,'" said Pelosi. "There ain't going to be an infrastructure bill unless we have the reconciliation bill passed by the United States Senate."

The enterprise of trying to advance things through the Senate will likely consume more time than you expect. Astrophysicists often describe how black holes warp time in outer space. The same is true on Capitol Hill. If they say it will take a month, expect six weeks. That's just kind of how the congressional time arrow bends.

So this may bleed well into August. That said, there is talk about the House advancing this bill in July. But frankly, if the House is going to wait on the Senate, the House may not really crank on anything until August. This is all contingent on how expeditiously the Senate advances the plans.



President Biden said he expected to get these bills "this summer" adding, before "the fiscal year is over." So, that's Sept. 30.

Mr. Biden also indicated the two bills must be "in tandem." He said he wouldn't sign anything "if only one comes to me."

That could prove to be his most critical statement in this entire gambit. Watch to see if the president sticks to that comment or reverses if Democrats are on the precipice of passing some form of infrastructure legislation — and nothing else is in reach.

WHAT'S IN THE BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE DEAL REACHED BY BIDEN, SENATORS?

I am often asked by colleagues to predict when the House or Senate will vote on a certain bill. When a committee will prepare a piece of legislation. How a given lawmaker will vote.

I rely on the same refrain. My crystal ball is broken. It's in the shop. And they're struggling to get the part in to fix it.

Parts and equipment were hard to come by during the pandemic. There were shortages. Supply chain issues. It was difficult to find washers, dryers, and air conditioners. But surprisingly, parts for crystal balls were in abundance. As a result, my crystal ball is now repaired and dialed-in. My crystal ball provides an incredible level of congressional clairvoyance.

As I always say each summer, "Beware the Ides of August." August is the most intense month politically. More volatile than the "Ides of March" which William Shakespeare wrote about.

This is why I took vacation in June.

You've heard of infrastructure week? This is going to be infrastructure summer. August is going to be a monster this year when it comes to dealing with infrastructure — and the debt ceiling.

REP. JASON SMITH SLAMS BIDEN'S SPENDING PRIORITIES: 'ABSOLUTELY UNACCEPTABLE'

Lawmakers will probably have to attach the debt ceiling hike to whatever infrastructure measure they can muster.

Meantime, Democrats are digging in on their own, \$6 trillion reconciliation infrastructure package, stocked with Democratic goodies. Provisions on health care. The climate. Potential taxes for the wealthy and corporations.

It's possible Democrats laid a trap for Republicans.

Why would the GOP go along with the narrow infrastructure bill presented today if Democrats still intend to simultaneously assemble their own massive bill — and

pass both?

Republicans may have secured a reasonable deal on the bipartisan package. But Democrats could take them to the cleaners with the reconciliation infrastructure bill.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., called the bipartisan plan “an encouraging sign of progress.” But McConnell argues Pelosi and Schumer “literally pulled out the rug” from the bipartisan coalition by continuing to push their own bill.

Here’s the trap for Republicans: If Democrats do their own bill, why should the GOP stay engaged? And if Republicans walk away from the bipartisan bill, Democrats will immediately blame the GOP for blowing up that accord. Democrats could accuse the GOP of failing to work together in good faith. Democrats will then do their own bill.

McConnell sees the potential peril for Republicans if Democrats pursue both bills at once.

“What it does is put my members, including myself, who were optimistic about doing a bipartisan infrastructure bill, in a position of our Democratic friends having to guarantee that the 2017 tax bill is unwound. That is our red line,” said McConnell on Fox News.

McConnell’s right. Liberals are insisting on their gargantuan bill.

“I’m not asking for perfect,” said Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass. “But understand this. We’re not leaving child care behind. We’re not leaving home health care behind. We are not leaving the green energy changes that we need to save our planet behind.”

[CLICK HERE TO GET THE FOX NEWS APP](#)

Warren added that she’d push for “the billionaires and the big corporations to step up and those parts must be in this package.”

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., blasted the bipartisan deal. She tweeted that to get GOP support Democrats had to give up on helping the middle class. She also said the bill lacked diversity. A statement from the House Progressive

Caucus also expressed skepticism about working with the GOP.

So, the accord on this “bipartisan infrastructure bill” is brittle at best.

But it was solid for about five minutes.

That’s why July and August will likely seem like five years on Capitol Hill.

Source:

<https://www.foxnews.com/politics/agreement-washington-dc-biden-five-minutes>

[Disclaimer]