



Infrastructure Political Shenanigans

Depending on which political party's representatives you listen to, or whatever "news" channel you frequent, individuals will hear distorted definitions of the current administration's infrastructure proposal. One group will tell you almost 100% of the bill is infrastructure and the other will tell you approximately only 5% of the \$2 trillion proposal relates to infrastructure. The media parrots these two messages depending on what channel you watch or paper/internet site you read. So how much of the administration's proposal is really tied to infrastructure?

The key to the answer is the definition of the word infrastructure, which the Oxford English Dictionary defines as, "the basic systems and services that are necessary for a country or an organization to run smoothly, for example buildings, transport and water and power supplies." The word originates from the early 20th century. Suffice it to say that government has been known to change the meaning of words to influence society, just like in George Orwell's book *1984*.

So, if we use the definition that existed just a year ago during the previous administration, which has applied to the administrations of the past decade, infrastructure encompasses roads, bridges, airports, trains, mass transit, water systems, the power grid, school buildings and broadband access (historically telecom infrastructure). If we total these projects, it adds up to \$716 billion or 35.8% of the \$2 trillion headline number. If we include borderline projects, the amount increases to \$766 billion or 38.3% of the \$2 trillion. Not 5% and certainly not almost 100%, but then again, politicians have never been known for their math skills.

West Virginia Senator Joe Manchin is making things difficult for his own party, as without his vote the plan would be doomed. He wants the bill to be more like a traditional infrastructure proposal. Current odds favor a leaner version of the proposal, but the question is would that be able to muster enough votes for passage?

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