

Jim Tobin ([00:00](#)):

Jerry, put your camera on if you can. If you can't, that's okay. It's easier to interact with you when I can see your lovely face.

Jerry Howard ([00:07](#)):

My face isn't looking very lovely.

Jim Tobin ([00:09](#)):

All right. Well, you don't have to. There you go. It's up to you, man. There you go.

Jerry Howard ([00:20](#)):

Welcome to Housing Developments. I'm Jerry Howard.

Jim Tobin ([00:22](#)):

And I'm Jim Tobin. Hi, Jerry.

Jerry Howard ([00:24](#)):

Jim, how are you, my friend?

Jim Tobin ([00:25](#)):

I'm doing fine. I'm doing fine. Grinding through the... I don't think spring has dog days, but just grinding through, getting back into the swing of things. Congress is going to have a busy session over the next few months.

Jerry Howard ([00:40](#)):

Yeah. Tell me about that. What's on the schedule first?

Jim Tobin ([00:42](#)):

Well, I think what we're going to see is the push on infrastructure, at least the starting gun on President Biden's infrastructure plan, starting to lay out, whether it's tax components or the actual infrastructure components, whether the Republicans actually get any traction from The White House on a bipartisan plan to shrink it from \$2 trillion down to... I think I saw John Cornyn came out with about \$800 billion in true infrastructure. So I think that's going to start to play out between the Capitol and Pennsylvania Avenue.

Jim Tobin ([01:22](#)):

Congress is starting to crank out some bills. You remember Nancy Pelosi's got a very, very thin majority. It's even thinner now with some retirements and members of Congress passing away. So votes on the House Floor are going to be a party line virtually or modestly bipartisan in order to move anything. But until those special elections shake out over the next couple of months, it's going to be tight majorities.

Jim Tobin ([01:43](#)):

Actually, a bit of bright news. We're going to have our Low Income Housing Tax Credit Bill, that we've been championing for the last several congresses, was introduced last week. This is the larger

programmatic changes. You remember last year at the end of the year package, we won a great victory by getting the 4% Floor enacted for the 4% Low Income Housing Tax Credits. So now, this is the rest of that bill, and that is really some of the programmatic changes to make the program easier to access and use and produce more housing. So we're excited to get lobbying on that, and hopefully get that into a final package at the end of this year.

Jerry Howard (02:21):

Well, I'm sure that our listeners have also heard, depending on what news channel they choose to listen to the outcries and fear, or the outcries of joy, at the prospect of the United States Senate ending the filibuster. I had a conversation with Senator McConnell a couple of weeks ago, and he is one who is very much afraid of that effort. And as I understand it, that's going to be pretty early on the agenda is trying to knock that out. What's your prognosis there?

Jim Tobin (02:54):

Yeah. They're going to put on some voter rights legislation on the Senate Floor that passed the House already and see if they can break the filibuster. You've got Joe Manchin, the gatekeeper right now of whether things pass or not, as the 50th Senator on the democratic side. He's alternately said, "I'm absolutely against removing the filibuster." Then he said, "I'm against removing the filibuster." In most circumstances that he's come back out and said, "No, I was serious. What don't you understand? I don't want to do the filibuster."

Jim Tobin (03:28):

But wait to be seen. I think it's unlikely that the filibuster goes away, but I'm not yet sold, and it depends on whether or not we see some movement on some either voter rights legislation that the Democrats are pushing and whether or not Senator Manchin changes his tune yet again. He's under incredible pressure to get on with the Liberal Program, the progressive program, because that means then we're looking at DC statehood, possibly Puerto Rico statehood. If that goes away, so many shoes are going to drop. It's going to be very interesting times. But right now, I'm holding out hope that Senator Manchin holds firm and we work on things bipartisanly.

Jerry Howard (04:14):

Speaking of holding firm, the President seemed to do just the opposite last week and into the weekend when talking about immigration and the number of refugees who led into the country, that he initially set the number the same as the Trump administration. And then after pressure from the far left, reversed his field, if you will. I wouldn't say collapsed like a house of cards. I'll just say reversed his field, and is now going to allow a lot more in. Now, is that a good thing for us? Could that mean an expanded workforce, or does it really not matter?

Jim Tobin (04:52):

It could be an expanded workforce, but I think right now it's not about refugee numbers. These are people that are coming from dire circumstances. It's going to take a while for them to get into the US economy and, I'll use the word assimilate. So I'm not so sure that's a salve on the workforce issues that we have.

Jim Tobin (05:14):

We have got to get to a Comprehensive Immigration Reform, secure the borders, find a solution for the crisis at the border now. Get to a visa program that can help people who want to work in this country come across the border legally into our industry workforce training for the supply of workers here now, especially since there are so many other industries that are not coming back full-steam, restaurants, retail. Now's the time for people who want a great paying career to get trained, especially by our friends at HBI, in the skill building trades, earn a career, start a business, make a good buck for their family. That's really what we need to be about.

Jim Tobin ([05:55](#)):

The Border Crisis is putting so much pressure on immigration right now. Unfortunately, it's going to keep the Comprehensive Immigration Reform that we need from happening. Again, the Progressive's jumped on Joe Biden. You can just see both sides he's going to get it from on this issue. There's a hard way out.

Jerry Howard ([06:15](#)):

Yeah. Well, I mean, I don't disagree with you in theory, but these guys couldn't even agree on small immigration reform.

Jim Tobin ([06:22](#)):

Right.

Jerry Howard ([06:23](#)):

They're certainly not going to agree on a comprehensive one. I think that is years off, unfortunately.

Jim Tobin ([06:28](#)):

Unfortunately.

Jerry Howard ([06:29](#)):

Another issue that I got to ask you about is the US Supreme Court. I know that once again, the President created a commission to look at the notion of expanding the court. The President then endorsed the idea of some of the legislation that's been introduced for expanding the court. So we don't really know where he is on this. But what's the prospects of this bill, that was introduced on the House side, getting traction?

Jim Tobin ([06:59](#)):

I think slim. Maybe it gets traction from the Progressive's in the far left, but I think that's about it. It's going to be really hard to pack the Court here. If you're a Republican and you expect the democratic majorities in the House and Senate to overreach in these first two years and then turn, essentially, through the midterm elections, turn control of the House or Senate back to the Republic, this is a classic example of overreach.

Jim Tobin ([07:28](#)):

I think the American public would react, other than the fringe, the fringe left would react really poorly to packing the Court, adding four more seats, just so Joe Biden could put four liberals on there. I'm really dubious on it happening. You and I were together when Justice Scalia passed away unexpectedly. The

Court will turn at some point, whether through retirements or deaths to level out. I don't think we need to pack the Court here. I think it's really dangerous.

Jerry Howard ([08:05](#)):

Not that I disagree with you, but the listeners need to be aware. The number of Justices that sit on the Supreme Court is in fact up to Congress to choose.

Jim Tobin ([08:15](#)):

That's right.

Jerry Howard ([08:17](#)):

There have been 10 Justices before. I think that's the most there's ever been. But it's been nine for over a hundred years now. It seems to work relatively well, but we'll go from there.

Jim Tobin ([08:29](#)):

I mean, look, Jerry, I'm sorry. What drives me crazy about this issue in a lot of ways is you have Justice Breyer, now the oldest of the liberal faction, he's being pressured publicly to retire. Now, I know it's a lifetime appointment, but you got to give my man a time to do what he wants to do here. The guy's whip smart, obviously, a jurist at heart. I mean, the left is just clamoring to get somebody "old" off the court, so you can put somebody young on there for the next 30 or 40 years. Just everything... This whole issue drives me crazy. Anyway, sorry.

Jerry Howard ([09:07](#)):

Well, let's go to another issue that's driving us both crazy and our members as well. Any updates at all on the lumber front?

Jim Tobin ([09:14](#)):

Yeah. Other than record high prices again last week, we've hit... Let's see, what's my number here. \$1,104 last week on lumber prices per thousand board foot. Out of control doesn't even do it justice. We continue to have conversations with the White House and Capitol Hill on the issue. We're having conversations with the Commerce Department this week, as well as we did last week. So it is top of mind.

Jim Tobin ([09:47](#)):

I'll tell you, Jerry. I was on Capitol Hill last week with Chuck Falcon, Jerry [Cantor 00:09:51] for a substitute for what their normal leadership visits are usually in March and February. But we were able to meet with many members of Congress in person. Oftentimes we were the first meeting that some Senate offices had had in over a year. And in every stop, the first issue out of a member of Congress or Senator's mouth was lumber. "Tell me about lumber." All I'm hearing about is lumber. "I've talked to my loggers. I've talked to my builders." So it is top of mind on Capitol Hill. Our grassroots continue. I think we're up to almost 3000, or over 3000 inputs to Capitol Hill. So we're going to turn that into action. And we're pursuing many different angles on Capitol Hill to keep the pressure on the administration to do something about lumber.

Jerry Howard ([10:42](#)):

Well, we got to keep the pressure on. This isn't an issue that is going to turn on a dime. We've got to keep the pressure on Capitol Hill. And a big thank you to our grassroots, the media, and kudos to our colleagues in our Public Affairs Department that are really, really getting as good a press coverage on this as anything we've ever gotten.

Jim Tobin ([11:05](#)):

Yeah.

Jerry Howard ([11:06](#)):

But also to the Home Innovation Research Lab, which is starting to look into other alternatives to wood framing. I've seen this in the past. You have to. When prices get too high for too long, our builders start to look at steel framing. And as it stands now, with some of the positions staked by the administration on the environment, recycled steel might be a more environmentally agreeable framing material. We'll have to know as we talk to these guys. But the bottom line is NHB is exploring every avenue of relief for our members. So we're still working it. We'll see what happens in the next couple of weeks. And we'll talk about it again on this podcast. I'm virtually certain to that.

Jim Tobin ([11:58](#)):

Yeah.

Jerry Howard ([11:59](#)):

The last issue that I wanted to raise, I think, is one that is interesting, and that is the possibility of an expanded housing market with the frequency of the sightings of these UFO's flying over the United States.

Jim Tobin ([12:15](#)):

Jesus. There does seem to be a renewed interest from other worlds in the little blue marble third from the sun here in the Milky way, or in our solar system. Yeah. Look, the last thing we need, Jerry, right now with lumber prices and other supply side constraints, is more people looking for homes right now. Maybe a geodesic dome made out of steel, that would be more appropriate for these guys, these beings. But yeah. No, we don't need any aliens coming down.

Jerry Howard ([12:50](#)):

Well, I think that's all we have for today, Jim.

Jim Tobin ([12:52](#)):

Yeah.

Jerry Howard ([12:53](#)):

We're looking forward to a busy week, and I look forward to talking to you again next week-

Jim Tobin ([12:58](#)):

You got it.

This transcript was exported on Dec 24, 2021 - view latest version [here](#).

Jerry Howard ([12:59](#)):

... on the next episode of Housing Developments. But for now, I'm Jerry Howard.

Jim Tobin ([13:03](#)):

And I'm Jim Tobin.

Jerry Howard ([13:05](#)):

Bye, bye.

Jim Tobin ([13:06](#)):

Bye.