CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE

Both the House and Senate met today, but held no roll call votes.

When the Senate reconvenes on Monday, February 1, the chamber will consider the nomination of Patricia Smith as Solicitor for the Department of Labor. The House will reconvene on Tuesday, February 2, but at this writing, no legislative program has been announced.

The President’s FY11 budget will be released on Monday, February 1.

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

PRESIDENT PROPOSES THREE-YEAR “FREEZE” ON DOMESTIC DISCRETIONARY SPENDING

President Obama announced during his State of the Union address on January 27 that his FY11 budget, to be released on February 1, will contain a flexible three-year freeze on domestic discretionary spending. The proposed freeze will not be across-the-board; some program budgets will go up and others down. The favored programs apparently will include student aid and energy research. The proposed freeze will not affect the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security, veterans programs, or foreign aid.
During a conference call with reporters on January 26, Robert L. Nabors, Deputy Director of the White House Office of Management and Budget, said that Pell Grants would not be affected and that education and energy research programs were “at the top of the list” for funding.

Earlier, the President announced that he would propose expanding certain middle-class benefits, including limiting a student borrower’s monthly repayment on a student loan to 10 percent of income above a basic living allowance.

As it does every year, AAU will develop budget analyses and funding charts for the federal research and education programs which it follows. Those materials will be posted on the AAU website throughout the day as they become available, along with links to the Office of Management and Budget and agency budget materials.

**SENATE REJECTS COBURN PROPOSAL TO CUT $120 BILLION IN SPENDING**

After several days of debate, the Senate yesterday voted to raise the statutory debt limit (H.J. Res. 45). During consideration of the legislation on January 26, the chamber rejected a proposal by Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK) to rescind $120 billion in federal spending. Senator Coburn was allowed to divide his amendment into four amendments, three of which the Senate rejected. (All four amendments required 60 votes for passage.) The single Coburn amendment adopted requires the Government Accountability Office to identify “duplicative government programs” and provide Congress an annual report on the findings.

One Coburn amendment would have rescinded funding for a variety of federal programs deemed wasteful or duplicative, including certain education programs (see association letters below). It failed by a vote of 33 yes, 61 no.

A third amendment, to reduce office budgets for Members of Congress, failed by a vote of 46 to 48, while a fourth, to rescind certain unspent and uncommitted federal funds, failed by a vote of 37 to 57.

**Higher Education Groups Oppose Coburn Amendment**

Earlier this week, the Student Aid Alliance (SAA) and two international education groups sent two separate letters to Senators urging them to oppose Senator Coburn’s amendment because of its proposed education cuts. AAU signed on to both letters.

Among the higher education programs singled out by Senator Coburn were college work-study, Javits graduate fellowships, and international education programs at the Departments of State, Education, and Defense, and the National Science Foundation.

The SAA letter said, “By targeting education and skills-training programs that produce the kinds of workers who drive economic growth, this amendment would serve to slow any recovery, damaging efforts to responsibly address federal deficits.”

The letter sent to Senators jointly by the Alliance for International Education and Cultural Exchange and the Coalition for International Education said that international education
programs across federal agencies are not duplicative, as Senator Coburn has charged, but complementary.

“Different programs reach American citizens at different stages of their academic careers,” said the letter. They provide “important early exposure for undergraduates; deep expertise for graduate students through ongoing language, area studies, and research opportunities; and specialized intensive training to reach very high levels of fluency.” The letter added that because these programs focus largely on the most critical and least commonly taught languages, they “foster and sustain badly needed national capacity that otherwise would not be developed.”

OTHER CONGRESSIONAL ISSUES

STUDENT AID ALLIANCE URGES SENATORS TO INCLUDE COLLEGE WORK STUDY FUNDS IN JOBS BILL

The Student Aid Alliance, a coalition of more than 80 organizations in which AAU participates, wrote to Senate Democratic leaders on January 26 to urge them to include additional funding for the College Work-Study (CWS) program in the jobs bill they are developing. The letter asked Senate leaders to match the $300 million for CWS included in the jobs legislation (H.R. 2847) approved by the House last December.

The Alliance letter said additional funding for the program “will provide immediate employment and an economic impact while helping students reach the president’s goal of America again leading the world in degree attainment by 2020.”

OTHER

IIE LAUNCHES EMERGENCY AID PROGRAM FOR HAITIAN STUDENTS IN U.S.

NEW

The Institute of International Education (IIE) has created an emergency grants program to help Haitian graduate and undergraduate students in the U.S. stay in school. The grants, up to $2,000 each, are aimed at helping students facing serious financial difficulties because of the earthquake in their home country.

Campus officials must submit nominations for the first round of grants by Tuesday, February 12, with awards to be announced the week of February 22. If funding permits, IIE will provide a second round of grants in late February.

For the first round of funding, each accredited U.S. campus may nominate up to five students for whom immediate help is needed for the 2010 spring semester. Campus officials will be asked what emergency assistance they are able to provide the nominated students, including tuition waivers, scholarships, housing, stipends, loans, work-study, and other forms of support.
The National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) and the Commonfund Institute released on January 28 their annual report on the financial performance of college and university endowments. The 2009 study examines the performance of college and university endowments during FY09 (July 1, 2008 – June 30, 2009).

The study found that endowments’ average investment return during the period was negative 18.7 percent, and the average spending rate rose by 0.1 percent to 4.4 percent. The study also provides detailed information about changes in endowment values, investment returns, asset allocations, and spending rates disaggregated by the size of institutional endowments.

Senator Charles Grassley (R-IA), ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee and a persistent critic of college and university endowment policies, said in a written statement, “I hope colleges won’t rely on double-digit losses as a reason to raise tuition or freeze student aid.” Senator Grassley also noted that private foundations are subject to a minimum endowment pay-out requirement and he suggested that pay-out requirements for all tax-exempt organizations, including colleges and universities, should be made “consistent.”

**CAPITOL HILL BRIEFING ON VOLUNTEER STEM PROFESSIONALS IN THE CLASSROOM SET FOR FEBRUARY 2**

New ways to leverage the expertise of science and technology professionals in K-12 classrooms will be discussed at a Capitol Hill luncheon briefing on Tuesday, February 2. The event, “STEM Professionals in the Classroom: Volunteering to Improve K-12 Education,” is scheduled for 12:00-1:30 p.m. EST in 2168 Rayburn House Office Building.

The session is sponsored by the American Chemical Society’s Science & the Congress Project, the National Science Teachers Association, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, The Business Roundtable, and ASME, in conjunction with The STEM Education Caucus.

The flyer for the event notes there is growing interest at the state and federal levels in increasing the involvement of active or late-career science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) professionals in K-12 education by sharing their content knowledge and hands-on experience in classrooms or informal environments. Strategies include increased use of alternative certification, informal and afterschool programs, and teacher mentoring opportunities.

Those interested in attending the Capitol Hill briefing should register here.

**CFR ENCOURAGED TO REGISTER FOR NHA ANNUAL MEETING AND HUMANITIES ADVOCACY DAY**

The National Humanities Alliance (NHA), in which AAU participates, will hold its 2010 annual meeting and Humanities Advocacy Day on March 8-9 in Washington, D.C. Members of the
CFR are encouraged to participate and to encourage others on campus to participate, including students.

The event provides an opportunity for members of the Alliance and others to discuss issues in the humanities, including their role in shaping and contributing to public policy, as well as to advocate on behalf of funding for the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Participants include higher education leaders, campus advocates, college and university faculty, teachers, students, museum professionals, librarians, and independent scholars.

Meeting sessions will be held March 8 at George Washington University, followed that evening by a Capitol Hill reception to celebrate the humanities with Members of Congress and congressional staff. Participants will return to Congress on the following day, March 9, to communicate the value of the humanities as part of Humanities Advocacy Day.

The deadline to register and to reserve hotel rooms at the conference rate is Thursday, February 7.

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