March 5, 2010

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CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE  NEW

The Senate met today to continue work on its $149-billion jobs bill (H.R. 4213), which would extend unemployment benefits and a variety of expired tax provisions. No roll call votes are expected. The House met in pro forma session.

Both chambers will return to session on Tuesday, March 9. CongressDaily reports that Senate leaders hope to finish work on the jobs bill next week, and may then take up a bill to reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration and possibly a smaller jobs bill. The smaller jobs bill (H.R. 2847), which provides tax cuts for businesses that hire unemployed workers, must be reapproved by the Senate because the House amended the measure in passing it this week.

The House next week may take further action on jobs legislation, depending on what is approved by the Senate and reported from committee. The chamber also is scheduled to consider two resolutions, one calling for a timeline for withdrawing U.S. troops in Afghanistan, the other dealing with the impeachment of a federal judge.

OTHER CONGRESSIONAL ISSUES

SIX ASSOCIATIONS ENDORSE SENATE PATENT REFORM AMENDMENT  NEW

Six higher education associations, including AAU, today expressed support for a substitute amendment to S. 515, the Patent Reform Act of 2009, announced by the Senate Judiciary
Committee on March 4. In a statement, the groups said that the substitute amendment “represents the successful culmination of a thorough, balanced effort to update the nation’s patent reform system to more effectively support the nation’s innovative capacity in the increasingly competitive global environment of the 21st century.”

They noted that “significant improvements” have been made in the version of the bill reported last year by the Committee. “The resultant procedures will provide a faster, less costly alternative to civil action to challenge patents, improving patent quality by eliminating invalid patents, while reducing abusive challenges and reducing litigation costs,” they said. “We urge that these significant improvements be included in any final version of the legislation.”

In addition to AAU, the statement was issued by the American Council on Education, the Association of American Medical Colleges, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, the Association of University Technology Managers, and the Council on Governmental Relations.

The six associations have been working together to ensure that the patent reform legislation under consideration in the House and Senate addresses the concerns of research universities and other higher education institutions. They advocate a patent process that most effectively ensures that the innovative ideas developed at those institutions can be brought to the marketplace to benefit the public.

The statement concludes, “This legislation does not contain everything universities have advocated. But given the heterogeneous nature of the patent community, balanced legislation cannot include every provision that any sector wants. The substitute amendment reforms current law in a way that balances the interests of the various sectors and substantially improves the patent system overall. We very much hope that this legislation will serve as the basis for a revised patent law enacted this year.”

**EXECUTIVE BRANCH**

**HIGHER EDUCATION AND LIBRARY GROUPS URGE FCC TO ADOPT NET NEUTRALITY PRINCIPLES UPDATED**

Eleven higher education and library associations, including AAU, sent a letter to Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Julius Genachowski on March 2, urging the FCC to “preserve the open Internet for our institutions, our users, and the public at large.”

The groups asked the FCC to protect the Internet from major threats such as broadband network operators degrading services for competitors and the over-consolidation of the market for Internet access. The letter calls for the FCC to do so by adopting net neutrality policies based on a series of seven principles, including non-discrimination for access to content and services, transparency of broadband network operators’ network management practices, and provision for service providers to engage in reasonable practices to manage technical issues, such as congestion, viruses, and spam.

The letter follows up on comments submitted to the FCC in January by four groups, including EDUCAUSE and the Association of Research Libraries. The comments responded to an FCC
notice of proposed rulemaking on turning the agency’s open Internet rules into official regulations.

OTHER

HUMANITIES INDICATORS PROJECT RELEASES ANALYSIS OF FIRST SURVEY OF HUMANITIES DEPARTMENTS

As part of its effort to begin charting trends in humanities research and education, the Humanities Indicators project on March 1 released its analysis of statistics gathered from humanities departments at some 1,400 colleges and universities throughout the United States.

Humanities Indicators, begun a year ago by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (AAAS) with the assistance of several disciplinary societies, is aimed at developing the type of long-term data and trend analysis provided for scientific and engineering disciplines by the National Science Board’s publication, Science and Engineering Indicators. The goal is to fill large gaps in empirical data about the humanities and to establish baselines for charting trends.

The Obama Administration’s FY11 budget for the National Endowment for the Humanities says the Endowment plans to partner with AAAS “to sustain and extend AAAS’s developmental work on the Humanities Indicators project.”

Humanities Indicators includes data about humanities education from primary through graduate school, the humanities workforce, humanities research and funding, and the humanities in American civic life.

AAU PROVIDES NEW LIST OF MAJOR FEDERAL AGENCY FELLOWSHIP AND TRAINEESHIP PROGRAMS

AAU has published on its website a new list of major fellowship and traineeship programs at seven federal agencies, with a pie chart that shows the percentage distribution of program funding by agency. The list, which covers both graduate and postdoctoral opportunities, includes the name and a description of each program by agency, funding levels for FY09 and FY10, the number of annual student and institutional grants, and contacts for each program.

The agencies included are the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, NASA, and the Departments of Education, Defense, Energy, and State.

AAU PUBLISHES FLYER ON ROLE OF BASIC RESEARCH IN ADVANCING INFRARED TECHNOLOGY

Now available on the AAU website is a one-page, full-color flyer on the role of federally funded basic research in the development of infrared technology and illustrating many of the ways the technology is used.
“Making the Invisible, Visible Through Infrared Technology” lists several federal agencies that funded the basic research to make the technology possible and describes how infrared is used today in aiding U.S. troops, observing climate change, detecting deadly diseases, improving energy efficiency, and understanding the universe.

DARPA OFFICIAL TO SPEAK AT CNSR MEETING ON MARCH 16  NEW

A senior official at the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), Dr. Alanna Mitchell, will speak to the Coalition for National Security Research (CNSR) on Tuesday, March 16. The event will take place at 2:00 p.m. in the Othmer Building of the American Chemical Society. This is one hour later than CNSR’s usual meeting time.

Dr. Mitchell, Special Assistant for Strategic Analysis and Roadmapping in the office of the DARPA director, will discuss DARPA’s FY11 budget request and plans for the future. The session is off the record.

The Othmer Building is located at the corner of 16th and M Streets, NW, Washington, DC.

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