April 23, 2010

CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE  NEW

Neither the House nor the Senate met today. Both will return to session on Monday, April 26.

The Senate on Monday is expected to hold a cloture vote on taking up legislation to reform the financial regulatory system (S. 3217). CQ Today reports that if Senate Democrats are able to secure the 60 votes needed to proceed on S. 3217, the chamber is likely to spend all week on the bill. If the cloture vote fails, the Senate could take up executive branch nominations and possibly the FY11 budget resolution (see item below).

The House next week will consider legislation aimed at reducing misspending at federal agencies (H.R. 3393) and improving Defense Department acquisitions (H.R. 5013), as well as a bill authorizing Puerto Rico to hold a referendum on its status as a U.S. territory.

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

SENATE BUDGET COMMITTEE APPROVES FY11 BUDGET RESOLUTION  NEW

The Senate Budget Committee on April 22 approved its version of the FY11 budget resolution, accommodating the President’s FY11 requests for defense, homeland security, and veterans programs, but proposing a $4 billion cut below the President’s planned freeze of non-security discretionary spending. The proposed cuts would be taken from the State Department.

The committee measure assumes that the President’s proposed increase for Pell Grants is fully funded, including the $5.5 billion program shortfall. However, it also assumes that
congressional appropriators will reduce funding in other areas, not specified in the resolution, to make up the $5.5 billion difference.

The budget resolution is the congressional budget blueprint. It is not signed into law by the President but does set the top-line number for FY11 appropriations. The measure approved by the committee includes reconciliation instructions that enable Congress to use the reconciliation process for tax and other revenue measures, allowing such bills to pass the Senate with a majority vote, rather than the 60 votes needed to overcome a filibuster. Congressional Democrats used the reconciliation process earlier this year to pass the health care and student loan reform legislation (P.L. 111-152).

Reports indicate that the instructions included in the resolution likely would be used for another jobs bill and extension of expired tax provisions, including the estate tax.

Democrats hope the Senate will approve the budget resolution before the Memorial Day recess, but they may not take it to the Senate floor if House Democrats decide not to move their own version. House Democrats are concerned that votes on the budget resolution could be used against vulnerable Democrats in the fall elections. Without a budget resolution, Congress could still move ahead on the FY11 appropriations bills but could not use the reconciliation process.

OTHER CONGRESSIONAL ISSUES

AAU, APLU, ACE URGE SWIFT REAUTHORIZATION OF AMERICA COMPETES ACT

AAU, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), and the American Council on Education (ACE) wrote to leaders of the House Science and Technology Committee on April 22 urging them to reauthorize the America COMPETES Act as soon as possible. The law expires at the end of 2010.

“[W]e encourage bipartisan support for a five-year reauthorization bill that builds upon the doubling path set forward by the original 2007 COMPETES Act to ensure sustained, long-term funding for the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy Office of Science, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology,” the associations wrote.

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

WHITE HOUSE EXTENDS DEADLINE FOR COMMENTS ON COMMERCIALIZATION OF UNIVERSITY R&D

The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and National Economic Council (NEC) have extended for 30 days the deadline for public comments on how to increase the economic impact of the federal investment in university R&D and of the “innovations being fostered in federal and private proof of concept centers (POCCs).”

The deadline for responding to the request for information (RFI) has been extended to Wednesday, May 26.
As reported previously, the RFI focuses on two questions: how best to encourage commercialization of university research and whether POCCs can be a means of stimulating the commercialization of early-stage technologies by bridging the “valley of death” between new technologies and product development.

The RFI is part of an ongoing effort by the Administration to enhance the commercialization of new technologies and ideas generated from university-based research. It builds upon earlier efforts, such as Commerce Secretary Gary Locke’s forum held February 24th, “Catalyzing University Research for a Stronger Economy.”

Individual institutions are encouraged to respond to this request for information with ideas and suggestions from faculty and administrators on their own campuses.

A group of four associations—AAU, the American Council on Education, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, and the Association of American Medical Colleges—hope to submit a joint response by the original April 26 deadline. Once the comments are submitted, they will be made available to campuses.

**OTHER**

**GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY JOINS AAU**  NEW

AAU announced on April 21 that the Georgia Institute of Technology has joined the association. The AAU membership approved the invitation to Georgia Tech on April 20 at the spring meeting of the AAU presidents and chancellors in Washington, DC. The addition of Georgia Tech brings AAU membership to 63, including 61 U.S. universities and two Canadian.

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