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CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE  NEW

Congress has adjourned for the early spring recess. The House will return to session on Tuesday, March 29. The Senate will reconvene on Monday, March 28, when it will resume consideration of S. 493, legislation to reauthorize two small business research programs: the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and the Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs. (See article below.)

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

CONGRESS APPROVES FY11 CR LASTING THROUGH APRIL 8  NEW

Congress has approved, and the President has signed, a three-week continuing resolution (CR) that will sustain FY11 federal funding through April 8. This sixth FY11 CR includes an additional $6 billion in cuts from current spending levels. The House approved the bill on March 15 by a vote of 271 to 158; the Senate approved the measure on March 17 by a vote of 87 to 13. The short-term bill was needed to sustain government funding after the current CR was to expire today.

CQToday reports there is growing opposition to any further short-term CRs, noting that “rank-and-file lawmakers in both parties said they will not support another stopgap funding bill…” Further, Senate Republican leaders have vowed to resist any further short-term spending measure after this one that does not include defense funding for the rest of FY11.
National Journal Daily reports that congressional leaders believe they need to reach agreement on the longer term FY11 CR by the end of March in order to give both chambers time to move the package before the two-week Easter recess begins on April 18.

Based on the House Appropriations Committee press release, the new measure includes no policy riders and makes no cuts in the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the National Science Foundation (NSF), or the Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Science. The bill reduces or terminates 25 programs for a saving of $3.5 billion and eliminates “$2.6 billion in earmark account funding that was automatically renewed in the CR approved by the previous Congress in December.” The press release includes on the earmark list $63 million in Cross Agency Support at NASA, as well as $20 million from scientific and technological research and $47 million from research facility construction at the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

**UPDATED ANALYSIS OF IMPACT OF H.R. 1 ON ENERGY DEPARTMENT PROGRAMS NOW AVAILABLE**

An updated analysis is now available on the impact of the cuts to Department of Energy (DOE) programs contained in the House-passed FY11 continuing resolution (H.R. 1). In the DOE Office of Science alone, the proposed cuts would prompt “immediate layoffs of thousands of highly skilled scientists, engineers, technologists, and support personnel and contractors at both national laboratories and universities,” says the document. It adds that the cuts would eliminate government support “for hundreds of PhD researchers and graduate students in university research programs across the country, which could purge an entire generation of scientists and engineers.”

**OTHER CONGRESSIONAL ISSUES**

**SENATE POSTPONES APPROVAL OF SMALL BUSINESS RESEARCH BILL**

**UPDATED**

The Senate this week debated but did not pass legislation (S. 493) to reauthorize two small business research programs: the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and the Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs. The chamber is expected to approve the bill following next week’s recess. Work on the bill has been extended by Senators using consideration of the bill as an opportunity to debate a variety of policy and funding issues, most of which are not directly related to the underlying legislation.

The House Small Business Committee held a hearing on SBIR/STTR reauthorization on March 16 and will hold another hearing on April 7. The House Science, Space, and Technology Committee’s Subcommittee on Technology and Innovation will hold a hearing on the programs on March 31.

**STATEMENT EXPLAINS AAU POSITION ON SMALL BUSINESS RESEARCH REAUTHORIZATION**
AAU has developed a two-page position statement that explains the association’s view on reauthorization of the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs. As the statement makes clear, AAU supports reauthorization of the two small business research programs but believes the funding set-aside from major research agency budgets should not be increased.

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY BEGINS QUADRENNIAL TECHNOLOGY REVIEW, REQUESTS INFORMATION

Institutions are encouraged to respond to a request for information (RFI) issued by the Department of Energy (DOE) earlier this week related to the launch of the DOE Quadrennial Technology Review (DOE-QTR), which is analogous to the Quadrennial Defense Review undertaken every four years by the Department of Defense.

The DOE-QTR was announced last week by Secretary of Energy Steven Chu and is in response to a recommendation made by the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) in its November 2010 “Report to the President on Accelerating the Pace of Change in Energy Technologies Through an Integrated Federal Energy Policy.” Along with the RFI, DOE released a framing document describing the goals of the DOE-QTR, which include, among other things, the development of broad roadmaps for advancing key energy technologies, systems, and sectors; establishment of principles by which the Department can judge the priority of various technology efforts; and the ability to describe connections between energy technology innovation and energy policy. Additional information about the DOE-QTR can be found here.

The public comment period ends on April 15, 2011.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ISSUES GUIDANCE LETTER ON PROGRAM INTEGRITY REGULATIONS

On March 17, the Department of Education issued a guidance letter on the final program integrity regulations published in the Federal Register on October 29, 2010. The letter provides guidance on three areas of the final regulations: state authorization, incentive compensation, and misrepresentation. The letter states that it "is provided to assist institutions with understanding the changes to the regulations in these areas, and does not make any changes to the regulations."

A copy of the letter is attached.

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