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CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE  NEW

The House met today to complete the FY12 Legislative Branch appropriations bill (H.R. 2551); the Senate voted down the House-passed “Cut, Cap, and Balance Act (H.R. 2560) (see story below). When the House reconvenes on Monday, July 25, it is scheduled to begin consideration of the FY12 Interior-Environment appropriations bill (H.R. 2584). Later in the week, the chamber also may take up legislation to prohibit the National Labor Relations Board from blocking Boeing’s decision to relocate a factory to South Carolina (H.R. 2587).

The Senate also will reconvene on Monday, July 25, and will consider nominations. The legislative calendar has not been announced.

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

BUDGET NEGOTIATIONS INTENSIFY AS DEADLINE APPROACHES  NEW

With the August 2 deadline for raising the national debt limit fast approaching, there is no clear path to a deal that would address the deficit and raise the debt ceiling. Senate Democrats reacted angrily today to news that President Obama and House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) were working on a $3 trillion deficit reduction package that included spending and entitlement cuts but no upfront revenue increases.

While the White House says there is no deal, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) said this morning that the Obama-Boehner talks sounded serious enough that he and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) were placing their own fallback proposal on hold for now and that he would not keep the Senate in session over the weekend, according to CQ.com. Senator Reid had
said earlier in the week that the Senate would be in session every day until a budget deal was completed.

The Reid-McConnell fallback plan would allow the President to raise the debt ceiling in three stages over the next several months, if each request were accompanied by a package of proposed spending cuts. As proposed originally, the plan would provide no guarantee that spending cuts would be implemented, but the two Senators said they were working to incorporate into the proposal about $1.5 trillion in actual spending cuts over 10 years.

Potentially still in the mix is a proposal from the “Gang of Six,” the bipartisan group of Senators who have been trying to work out a larger deficit reduction deal and who re-entered the deficit discussion arena on July 19 with a new package. Politico reports that the proposal would cut the deficit by $3.7 trillion over 10 years “with elaborate procedures aimed at prodding congressional committees to find cuts in entitlement programs, discretionary spending, and an overhaul of the tax code.” The group had abandoned its formal deliberations in May after Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK) pulled out of the talks, but he has rejoined the group. The latest Gang of Six proposal is available here.

Meanwhile, the Senate today voted down the House-passed “Cut, Cap, and Balance Act,” (H.R. 2560) on a party line vote of 46 to 51. The measure would make $5.8 trillion in spending cuts and bar an increase in the debt limit unless Congress has approved a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. The bill, based on a framework developed by the conservative Republican Study Committee, was passed by the House on July 19 on a largely party-line vote of 234 to 190.

**HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN DELAYS MARKUPS TO SEPTEMBER NEW**

House Appropriations Committee Chairman Harold Rogers (R-KY) has postponed to September marking up the last two of the committee’s 12 spending bills for FY12: Labor-HHS-Education and Transportation-HUD, according to CQ.com. The publication notes that the panel has allocated most of the panel’s overall FY12 spending cuts to these two bills, along with State-Foreign Operations.

CQ.com notes that any overall deficit reduction/debt ceiling deal would likely change the level of FY12 discretionary spending the committee has been working with, and that the overall budget debate has “used up all of the logistical and political oxygen at the Capitol.”

**EXECUTIVE BRANCH**

**HHS RELEASES ANPRM ON THE USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH NEW**

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) today released an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) on protection of human subjects used in research. This represents a major revision of the Common Rule and is part of the Administration's effort to improve and reduce regulations.

Comment is sought on the following:
1. Revising the existing risk-based framework to more accurately calibrate the level of review to the level of risk.

2. Using a single Institutional Review Board review for all domestic sites of multi-site studies.

3. Updating the forms and processes used for informed consent.

4. Establishing mandatory data security and information protection standards for all studies involving identifiable or potentially identifiable data.

5. Implementing a systematic approach to the collection and analysis of data on unanticipated problems and adverse events across all trials to harmonize the complicated array of definitions and reporting requirements, and to make the collection of data more efficient.

6. Extending federal regulatory protections to apply to all research conducted at U.S. institutions receiving funding from the Common Rule.

Once the proposed rule is published in the Federal Register, the public will have 60 days to comment on it.

**DOD’S MINERVA INITIATIVE IS ACCEPTING RESEARCH PROPOSALS**

University consortia and individual investigators are encouraged to submit white papers and full funding proposals to the Minerva Initiative, the Department of Defense’s competitive, university-based social science basic research program. Because of a delay in releasing the funding solicitation, program managers have extended the deadline for white paper submissions to Friday, September 16, 2011, and the deadline for full proposals to Tuesday, November 22, 2011.

The Minerva Initiative was created in 2008 under the leadership of former Defense Secretary Robert Gates as a means to improve our fundamental understanding of the social, cultural, behavioral, and political forces that shape regions of the world of strategic importance to the U.S. Secretary Gates announced the Initiative at the April 2008 meeting of the AAU presidents and chancellors in Washington, DC.

The Minerva Initiative is inviting white papers and full proposals for basic research in the following seven areas:

(1) Strategic Impact of Religious and Cultural Changes
(2) Terrorism and Terrorist Ideologies
(3) Science, Technology and Military Transformations in China and Developing States
(4) National Security Implications of Energy and Environmental Stress
(5) New Theories of Cross-Domain Deterrence
(6) Regime and Social Dynamics in Failed, Failing, and Fragile Authoritarian States
(7) New Approaches to Understanding Dimensions of National Security, Conflict, and Cooperation

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