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CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE  NEW

The House and Senate did not meet today; both will reconvene on Monday, February 13. The House will be in pro forma session on Monday, with no legislative program announced. The Senate will consider an executive branch nomination.

As much of Washington focuses on the release of the President’s FY13 budget on Monday, congressional negotiations continue on legislation to extend through 2012 the payroll tax holiday, unemployment benefits, and the Medicare “doc” fix, which prevents a 27-percent drop in physician reimbursements under Medicare. In late December, when Republicans and Democrats could not agree on how to cover the $160 billion cost of a full-year extension, they extended the provisions through the end of this month.

But House and Senate negotiators appear to have made little progress on the full-year extension, reports CQ.today. There is “ill will and frustration” over proposals to limit unemployment benefits, and there are disagreements over how to cover the cost of the extensions. It remains unclear if an agreement can be concluded before March 1.

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

FY13 BUDGET BRIEFINGS ANNOUNCED  NEW

As in past years, the White House and federal agencies will brief the press and the public on the President’s FY13 budget after it is released this Monday, February 13. Below is information about the scheduled briefings for selected agencies.
Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP)
Time: 2/13/12 at 1:30 PM
Location: AAAS Auditorium, 1200 NY Avenue NW, Washington DC (entrance at 12th and H)
RSVP: http://www.whitehouse.gov/ostp/registration and webcast: http://www.aaas.org/go/ostp

NASA
Time: 2/13/12 at 2:00 PM
Location: Webb Auditorium, NASA Headquarters, 300 E St., SW or televised at http://www.nasa.gov/ntv
After the overview briefing on NASA's fiscal year 2013 budget, the associate administrators of the mission directorates and NASA's chief technologist will hold individual teleconferences to discuss the budget's impact on their specific areas.
To join the teleconferences, reporters should call 800-369-6087 or 773-756-0843. The call leaders name is Dave Steitz. Organization call times are (all times Eastern):
3:30 p.m. - Human Exploration and Operations Mission Directorate, passcode: HEO
4:30 p.m. - Science Mission Directorate, passcode: SCIENCE
5:15 p.m. - Office of the Chief Technologist and the Space Technology Program, passcode: TECHNOLOGY
6 p.m. - Aeronautics Research Mission Directorate, passcode: AERONAUTICS

Department of Energy (DOE)
Time: 2/13/12 at 2:30 PM
Location: Forrestal Building, 1000 Independence Ave., SW
Those unable to attend in person at 2:30 may call in to the briefing by calling (202) 287-5318. The department has asked that phone participant refrain from conferencing and transferring participants into the call, as it could create connectivity problems for all participants.

National Science Foundation (NSF)
Time: 2/13/12 at 3:30 PM
Location: National Science Foundation Headquarters, Room 1235, Arlington, VA
Notes: RSVP by February 10 to olpa-events@nsf.gov or (703) 292-8070.

Department of Agriculture (USDA)
Time: 2/13/12 at 4:00 PM
Location: Room 107A 1400 Independence Ave., SW

National Institutes of Health (NIH)
Time: 2/14/12 at 9:00 AM
Location: Building 1, Wilson Hall (3rd floor), NIH Campus (9000 Rockville Pike, Bethesda)
RSVP by 5:00 PM, Friday, February 10, to Thuy Vo, Office of Legislative Policy and Analysis: vot@mail.nih.gov. Seating is limited.

Department of Education
Time: 2/14/12 at 10:00 AM
Location: Main Auditorium, Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW
OTHER CONGRESSIONAL ISSUES

LEGISLATORS REINTRODUCE OPEN ACCESS BILL  NEW

Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) and Rep. Mike Doyle (D-PA) yesterday reintroduced legislation (S. 2096, H.R. 4004) to require each federal agency supporting $100 million or more in annual research funding to provide free public access to articles reporting on research it has funded. The legislation is a sharp contrast to legislation introduced last December by Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA) that would essentially outlaw such public access without the prior consent of the publisher of that work (see next item).

With one exception, the provisions of the Federal Research Public Access Act (FRPAA) generally are consonant with recommendations of the Scholarly Publishing Roundtable, which AAU has endorsed. One concern about the bill is that it establishes a maximum six-month embargo period between the time an article is published in a peer-reviewed journal and when the agency makes the final accepted manuscript of that article publicly available for free. This is only half of the 12-month embargo period used by the National Institutes of Health’s (NIH) PubMed Central, which NIH adopted after extensive discussions with scholarly journal publishers.

AAU and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) will send a letter to the bill’s sponsors next week expressing strong support for the goals of the bill and suggesting alternatives to the measure’s six-month embargo period.

AAU, APLU EXPRESS OPPOSITION TO RESEARCH WORKS ACT

AAU and APLU sent a letter to members of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee on February 6 expressing strong opposition to the Research Works Act (H.R. 3699), introduced last December by Committee Chair Darrell Issa (R-CA). The bill would prohibit federal research funding agencies from providing free public access to scientific and scholarly articles arising from federally funded research without prior permission from the articles’ publisher.
The Research Works Act would effectively eliminate NIH’s PubMed Central, which provides free public access to the final accepted manuscripts of articles reporting on NIH-funded research. The manuscripts are posted on PubMed Central no later than 12 months after publication of those articles in a peer-reviewed journal.

The AAU-APLU letter says H.R.3699 also runs counter to the America COMPETES reauthorization bill, which created an interagency committee to coordinate federal public access policies across agencies and in collaboration with external stakeholders. "Because H.R. 3699 would move federal research policy backward rather than forward," says the letter, "we urge you to oppose this legislation and instead support balanced federal public access policies that promote the public interest and advance science and scholarship."

**EXECUTIVE BRANCH**

**WHITE HOUSE RELEASES PCAST REPORT ON STEM EDUCATION**

At a White House event on February 7, the President released a new report from the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) on how to increase the numbers of U.S. students earning degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. The report, *Engage to Excel: Producing One Million Additional College Graduates with Degrees in STEM,* calls on the nation’s colleges and universities to “improve the first two years of STEM education” with “widespread adoption of empirically validated teaching practices.”

AAU President Hunter Rawlings praised the PCAST report, both in a prepared statement and in remarks during a panel discussion held as part of the White House event. He noted that AAU’s five-year undergraduate STEM education initiative aims to address the very issues that the report raises. The AAU project, which was announced in September, seeks to help higher education institutions assess the quality of teaching in STEM fields, share promising practices, and encourage departments and faculty members to use the most effective teaching methods in their classrooms, particularly for those in the first two years of college.

President Obama also announced several initiatives to bolster the number of STEM graduates, including a $100 million initiative at the National Science Foundation (NSF) to improve undergraduate STEM education practices, a joint NSF-Department of Education program to improve K-16 mathematics education, and an $80 million investment to help prepare effective STEM teachers. He added that private and philanthropic groups would invest $22 million to complement these federal efforts.

**AAU, APLU COMMIT TO ENSURING GLOBAL ACCESS TO MEDICAL ADVANCES**

AAU and APLU issued a statement on February 8 expressing their commitment to work with their member institutions and the federal government “to ensure that research advances developed by universities related to public health benefit all people, including those in the developing world.”

The statement was issued in conjunction with a White House event held to highlight progress in public- and private-sector efforts to harness innovation on behalf of global development. As
described in a White House fact sheet, the Administration seeks to promote the use scientific and technological innovations “to accelerate progress toward development goals in health, food security, climate change, energy and environmental sustainability, and broad-based economic growth.”

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