April 13, 2012

CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE

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Senate Budget Committee to Mark Up FY13 Budget Resolution After All

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CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE

The House and Senate have been in recess for the past two weeks and will reconvene on Monday, April 16.

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

SENATE BUDGET COMMITTEE TO MARK UP FY13 BUDGET RESOLUTION AFTER ALL

Senate Budget Committee Chairman Kent Conrad (D-ND) is planning to mark up an FY13 budget resolution in committee next week, as early as Tuesday, reports CQ.com. The markup follows several weeks during which Senate Democratic leaders have insisted they did not need to mark up a budget resolution for the coming year because last year’s Budget Control Act (BCA) had already set the FY13 level for discretionary spending. (The budget resolution is a congressional document that is not signed into law by the President, but is used to set congressional spending and revenue priorities. One of its most important features is the limit it sets on discretionary spending in a given fiscal year.)

Details of the Conrad plan have not been made public, but the measure will “provide the Democratic-led Senate an outline for federal spending in the next fiscal year that would stand against the budget (H. Con. Res. 112) passed by the Republican-led House,” reports CQ.com. The House budget resolution would cut discretionary spending by $19 billion below the level approved in the BCA, with an $8 billion increase for defense and a $27 billion cut for non-defense spending.
EXECUTIVE BRANCH

PANEL FAILS TO REACH AGREEMENT ON NEW TEACHER EDUCATION RULES

The group charged by the Department of Education with negotiating new federal rules to govern teacher preparation programs was unable to reach agreement in its final conference call on April 12, leaving a number of major issues unresolved. The Department’s proposal would require states to rate teacher education programs based on “value-added” outcome measures of graduates’ future students, graduates’ employment outcomes, and customer-satisfaction surveys. It also would require teacher education programs to have either specialized professional accreditation or be recognized by the states in which they are located. The rating system would be tied to eligibility for federal student aid.

The impasse, which follows three months of discussions, “leaves the Department free to propose whatever evaluation system it wants, without regard to compromises reached during negotiations,” reports the Chronicle of Higher Education. “However, department officials implied they will take the panel’s views into account when drafting their rules.”

The American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education issued a statement commending members of the negotiated rulemaking panel for their “meticulous deliberations” and urged stakeholders in teacher education to provide recommendations when the Department issues its proposed rules for comments. The statement also details a number of concerns raised by the negotiators, including the appropriate role of the federal government in determining teacher education program quality, the validity of the proposed rating systems, and the requirement for states and programs to submit workforce data they do not yet have the capacity to collect.

OTHER

ACE PUBLISHES BACKGROUND MATERIAL ON COLLEGE COSTS

The American Council on Education (ACE) has published two short reports that provide background information and data about college costs. The two documents discuss trends in costs, how college pricing works, and the broader economic, policy, and technological trends that have affected higher education finances.

“Putting College Costs Into Context” describes college costs trends, key terms, the factors that contribute to the increasing cost of a college education, and steps colleges and universities are taking to alleviate costs. The companion report, “The Anatomy of College Tuition,” places higher education in the context of the nation’s industrial structure and economic history, providing “context that is often missing from contemporary discussions about higher education.” The report was written by Robert B. Archibald and David H. Feldman, based on their book, Why Does College Cost So Much? The introduction adds:

“Crafting a constructive public policy toward a complex sector like higher education requires a clear understanding of the basic forces tugging on the industry…Overheated
rhetoric about the supposed ills and inefficiency of higher education often leads to counterproductive policy ideas that confuse symptoms with causes and that overestimate what government can do.”

**YOUNG SCIENTISTS ENCOURAGED TO APPLY FOR ASPIRE PRIZE  NEW**

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC), an organization of 21 Pacific-Rim countries, including the United States, has announced the 2012 competition for its ASPIRE Prize. The prize is awarded to a young scientist in an APEC-member country who has demonstrated research excellence.

This year’s competition for the ASPIRE Prize—which is short for “APEC Science Prize for Innovation, Research and Education”—will honor a young scientist who has demonstrated a commitment to excellence in scientific research, has cooperated with scientists from other APEC-member economies, and has contributed to this year’s theme of health innovation.

Additional information about the ASPIRE Prize and the nomination process is available here. The deadline for submitting nominations is Wednesday, May 2, 2012.