April 27, 2012

CONTENTS

CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE  NEW

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS
House Appropriations Committee Releases FY13 Subcommittee Allocations
Senate Committee Approves FY13 Energy and Water Appropriations Bill  UPDATED
Senate FY13 Agriculture Funding Bill Boosts Funding for AFRI  NEW
Policymakers Offer Dueling Proposals to Prevent Student Loan Interest Rate Increases  NEW

OTHER CONGRESSIONAL ISSUES
House Approves DATA Act
Senate Farm Bill Includes AFRI Reauthorization

EXECUTIVE BRANCH
OSTP Releases “Bioeconomy Blueprint”  NEW
Associations Release Report on Bridging Science and Security

OTHER
“Golden Goose Award” Previewed at April 25 Press Conference  UPDATED
Submission Deadline Approaching for American Collegiate Innovation Video Contest  NEW

CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE  NEW

The House met today to approve a bill (H.R. 4628) to extend the current 3.4-percent interest rate on Stafford student loans (see item below), as well as two cybersecurity measures. The Senate did not meet.

Both chambers are out of session next week.

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE RELEASES FY13 SUBCOMMITTEE ALLOCATIONS

The House Appropriations Committee on April 25 approved the FY13 funding allocations for its 12 subcommittees. The so-called “302(b)” allocations were based on the top-line discretionary spending number in the House-approved FY13 budget resolution. That total is $19 billion below the level agreed to in last year’s Budget Control Act, which the Senate is using.
The House allocation for the Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee, which funds both student aid and the National Institutes of Health (NIH), is $150 billion. This is $6.3 billion, or four percent, below the FY12 enacted level and $7.7 billion less than the Senate FY13 allocation.

The allocation for Interior-Related Agencies, where the National Endowment for the Humanities is funded, is $28 billion. This is $1.27 billion, or four percent, less than the FY12 allocation and $1.67 billion, or six percent, less than the Senate FY13 allocation.

The allocation for Commerce-Justice-Science, which funds the National Science Foundation (NSF) and NASA, is $51.131 billion. This is $1.729 million less than the FY12 level and $729 million less than the Senate FY13 allocation. (It is worth noting that the House CJS Subcommittee marked up its bill on April 19, providing a $299-million increase for NSF and a $5 million increase for NASA Science.)

The allocation for Defense is $519.2 billion. This is $8 billion more than the Senate number and about $1 billion more than the FY12 level, reports CQ.com.

**SENATE COMMITTEE APPROVES FY13 ENERGY AND WATER Appropriations BILL**  
**UPDATED**

The Senate Appropriations Committee approved its FY13 Energy and Water funding bill on April 26 with funding increases for Department of Energy (DOE) science and technology programs.

The bill, which was approved in subcommittee on April 24, provides $4.909 billion for the DOE Office of Science, which is $35 million above the FY12 funding level and $85 million above the House committee-approved level. The Senate bill also provides $312 million for ARPA-E, which is $37 million above the FY12 level and $112 million above the House level.

**SENATE FY13 AGRICULTURE FUNDING BILL BOOSTS FUNDING FOR AFRI**  
**NEW**

The Senate Appropriations Committee on April 26 approved its FY13 Agriculture appropriations bill with $298 million for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI). This is a $33.5 million increase for the competitively funded research, education, and extension program. The companion House appropriations bill has not yet been marked up.

**POLICYMAKERS OFFER DUELING PROPOSALS TO PREVENT STUDENT LOAN INTEREST RATE INCREASES**  
**NEW**

After President Obama this week made the scheduled doubling of the Stafford student loan interest rate on July 1 a campaign issue, Congressional leaders have been scrambling to introduce and consider their own proposals to postpone the rate increase for another year. The Congressional Budget Office has scored the cost of postponement for one year at $6 billion, so the major issue is how to pay for the change.
The House earlier today approved by a vote of 215 to 195 a bill (H.R. 4628) introduced by Rep. Judy Biggert (R-IL) that would pay for the postponement using a health care fund that covers prevention and public health for immunization campaigns, research, screenings and wellness education. House Democrats proposed legislation to pay for the postponement by eliminating certain tax breaks for the oil and gas industry.

Earlier in the week, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) introduced a bill (S. 2343) that would pay for the one-year extension of current interest rates by ending a tax break for S corporations; Senator Reid filed a cloture motion on the bill yesterday and the vote is expected to occur on Tuesday, May 8. Senate Republicans support the House Republicans’ approach.

Despite the harsh rhetoric—including the White House announcement today that the President would veto the House bill—there were some hints of future compromise. Leaders of both parties in the Senate met Thursday to explore offsets that might be acceptable to both Democrats and Republicans, reports CQ.com.

The higher education community, under the leadership of the American Council on Education, sent a letter to all House Members on April 24 expressing strong support for maintaining the current 3.4-percent interest rate on subsidized Stafford loans. The associations took no position on the offset for the measure, other than to oppose having it taken from other education programs. A similar letter will be sent to the Senate early next week.

**OTHER CONGRESSIONAL ISSUES**

**HOUSE APPROVES DATA ACT**

The House approved the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act (DATA Act) on April 25 under suspension of the rules. The measure (H.R. 2146) passed by voice vote.

Before the House vote, AAU, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), and the Council on Governmental Relations (COGR) worked with the bill’s author, Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA), and staff of the House Oversight Committee, which he chairs, to modify the bill. It now includes several changes that move toward eliminating duplicative financial reporting requirements for federal grants and contracts and creating a single reporting system with standard data elements. With these changes and with the understanding that the associations will be able to work toward additional improvements, the associations agreed to no longer oppose the House measure. They sent Chairman Issa and Ranking Member Elijah Cummings (D-MD) a letter to that effect on April 24.

The three associations opposed the version of the DATA Act approved by the Oversight Committee last June because it created centralized financial reporting on federal research grants and contracts without requiring federal agencies to drop their existing, similar reporting requirements. Instead of streamlining the reporting process, the bill would have led to duplicate reporting. The modified version of the bill goes a long way toward explicitly eliminating duplicative reporting requirements within three years.

**SENATE FARM BILL INCLUDES AFRI REAUTHORIZATION**
The Senate Agriculture Committee has released a proposal for the 2012 Farm Bill which includes reauthorization of USDA’s competitive grants program, the Agricultural Food and Research Initiative (AFRI), at its current authorized level of $700 million. AFRI is funded at $264 million for FY12, and the President’s FY13 budget proposes increasing funding to $325 million.

The House Agriculture Committee is wrapping up a series of field hearings before releasing its own version of the Farm Bill. Early indications suggest that the House bill will take a far different approach to programs such as food stamps, setting up a difficult battle to reach bipartisan agreement before the reauthorization deadline of September 30.

**EXECUTIVE BRANCH**

**OSTP RELEASES “BIOECONOMY BLUEPRINT”**

The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) on April 26 released its national Bioeconomy Blueprint, which aims to provide a roadmap for federal agencies “to enhance economic growth and job creation, improve the health of all Americans, and move toward a clean-energy future through scientific discovery and technological innovation.” At an event to roll out the Blueprint, OSTP Director John Holdren said, "The life sciences have proven to be a remarkably vital source of economic growth, and today they promise further game-changing advances in a wide range of commercial sectors."

Most of the Blueprint encompasses programs or efforts that are already underway, such as the founding of NIH's National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS), NSF’s Innovation Corps program, and the NIH Biomedical Workforce study. The Blueprint is organized around five major strategic objectives:

1. Supporting R&D investments that will provide the foundation for the future bioeconomy;

2. Facilitating the transition of bioinventions from research lab to market, including an increased focus on regulatory and translational sciences;

3. Developing and reforming regulations to reduce barriers, increase the speed and predictability of regulatory processes, and reduce costs while protecting human and environmental health;

4. Updating training programs and aligning academic institution incentives with student training for national workforce needs; and

5. Identifying and supporting opportunities for the development of public-private partnerships and precompetitive collaborations.

The Bioeconomy Blueprint was originally scheduled for release in January. AAU submitted comments in response to an RFI on the Bioeconomy Blueprint in December 2011.
ASSOCIATIONS RELEASE REPORT ON BRIDGING SCIENCE AND SECURITY

Last February, three associations, including AAU, convened a meeting with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to discuss ways to encourage communications about biosecurity risks between university research administrators and senior faculty and officials in the FBI’s directorate on weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

The meeting, organized by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), in collaboration with AAU and APLU, enabled university officials—including vice presidents of research or compliance, environmental health and safety officials, and biosafety officers—to better understand the role and responsibilities of the FBI in addressing biosecurity challenges. Likewise, FBI WMD Coordinators had the opportunity both to learn more about the challenges facing universities and to visit actual biology laboratories.

The report from that meeting, “Bridging Science and Security for Biological Research: A Dialogue between Universities and the Federal Bureau of Investigation,” is now available. The report describes the major themes that emerged at the meeting, including policy and programmatic suggestions to enable a safe, ethical, and secure research environment.

OTHER

“GOLDEN GOOSE AWARD” PREVIEWED AT APRIL 25 PRESS CONFERENCE

Three Members of Congress joined a group of organizations, including AAU, at a Capitol Hill press conference on April 25 to announce creation of the “Golden Goose Award,” which will honor the often unexpected and transformative outcomes of basic scientific research. The Members speaking at the press conference were: Jim Cooper (D-TN), whose idea it was to create the award, as well as Charlie Dent (R-PA) and Robert J. Dold (R-IL).

The Golden Goose Award will highlight the unpredictable nature of basic scientific research and the fact that some of the most important scientific discoveries come from federally funded research that may once have been viewed as unusual, odd, or obscure. In discussing the importance of basic research to our quality of life, Rep. Cooper said that if previous generations had seen the kind of scientific and technological advances that we have seen in our lifetimes, they would have called them “magic.”

The award is being launched by a coalition of seven organizations: AAU, AAAS, APLU, the Breakthrough Policy Institute, the Progressive Policy Institute, The Science Coalition, and the Task Force on American Innovation.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE APPROACHING FOR AMERICAN COLLEGIATE INNOVATION VIDEO CONTEST

Campus representatives are reminded that the deadline for submissions to the American Collegiate Innovation Video Contest is the end of May. They are asked to encourage their students to participate.
The video contest is sponsored by the Task Force on American Innovation (TFAI), in which AAU participates. The contest challenges college students to use their creativity and imagination in a three-minute video that demonstrates how federally funded scientific research has resulted in discoveries that have benefitted society.

The first-place winner will receive a $1,000 prize and a trip to Washington, D.C. to participate in an awards ceremony and a Congressional briefing at the U.S. Capitol.

The deadline for students to send in their videos is Thursday, May 31. Details about the competition are available here.

End of document