CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE

The House and Senate have been out of session for the August recess and the national party conventions and will return on Monday, September 10. Among the few must-pass items for the remaining days of the congressional session is a stopgap funding bill to sustain federal discretionary spending into Fiscal Year 2013, which begins on October 1. (See next item.)

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

HOUSE COULD VOTE AS EARLY AS NEXT WEEK ON SIX-MONTH FY13 STOPGAP FUNDING BILL  NEW

The House could vote as early as next Thursday, September 13, on a continuing resolution (CR) that would sustain federal appropriations for the first six months of FY13, reports CQ.com. Appropriators have been “working toward a ‘clean’ CR largely free of the kinds of add-on provisions that catchall funding measures have carried in the past,” adds the publication. A draft of the document is not yet available to the public.

If approved by both chambers and signed by the President, the CR would postpone battles over FY13 spending until next March, well beyond the November elections.

Before adjourning for the August recess, House and Senate leaders announced that they and President Obama had reached agreement on the outlines of the deal. In exchange for having an opportunity to make further cuts in FY13 spending next year, House Republicans agreed to abide by the FY13 discretionary spending level approved in last year’s Budget Control Act and used by the Senate in its FY13 appropriations bills. The House had sought to reduce that spending total by $19 billion.
AAU AND APLU OPPOSE NIH FUNDING RESTRICTIONS IN HOUSE FY13 APPROPRIATIONS BILL  NEW

AAU and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) sent a letter to House appropriators on September 6 expressing opposition to several restrictions on funding decisions at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) contained in the panel’s FY13 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill.

“Crippling NIH by freezing its funding while at the same time reducing its flexibility with well-intended but ill-conceived mandates will ultimately delay the search for cures and treatments intended to benefit the American people,” said the letter.

The associations wrote that Congress should not “tie the hands of the agency by setting arbitrary boundaries on the number and size of awards, dictating a minimum amount for the Clinical and Translational Science Awards, and establishing a minimum number of National Research Service Awards.” Other problematic provisions the associations identified in the subcommittee bill include a proposal to further lower the extramural salary cap to Executive Level III, a provision to set an “arbitrary” ratio of extramural to intramural NIH research funding, and language to prohibit NIH from using funds “for any economic research programs, projects, or activities.”

OTHER

DISTRICT JUDGE HOLDS HEARING ON LEGAL CHALLENGE TO ANIMAL ENTERPRISE TERRORISM ACT

A federal district court judge in Massachusetts held a hearing last week on the lawsuit filed by five animal rights activists challenging the constitutionality of the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (AETA). As described by the National Association for Biomedical Research (NABR), “the suit alleges the AETA is unconstitutional and ‘has cast a chill over the animal rights community,’ leading activists to refrain from participating in protests and undercover filming operations due to concerns about prosecution.”

AAU has joined NABR and a number of other organizations in filing an amicus brief supporting the government position and urging the court to rule that the AETA is constitutional. As stated by NABR, “The brief argues the law is a measured and important response to threats, bombings, arson, and vandalism committed by animal rights extremists against research facilities and scientists who conduct life-saving research with laboratory animals. Several of the points raised by the amicus brief were mentioned during the hearing.”

It is not clear when a final decision in the case will be reached.

GOLDEN GOOSE AWARD WEBSITE GOES LIVE  NEW
Next week is the first annual awards ceremony for the Golden Goose Award, a new honor created by a coalition of academic, scientific, and business organizations, including AAU, to highlight the human and economic benefits of federally funded scientific research. The focus of the award is on seemingly unusual or obscure studies that have led to major breakthroughs and had a significant impact on society. The inaugural award ceremony, which will honor the accomplishments of an individual researcher and two research teams, will be held September 13 on Capitol Hill.

The [website](http://www.aau.edu) for the new award provides additional information about the award ceremony, as well as about development of the award, participating Members of Congress, and the sponsoring organizations. Following the award ceremony, the website will feature photos and video from the event, as well as a video and other materials that tell the stories of the awardees and their discoveries.

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