CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE

Both chambers are scheduled to reconvene next Tuesday, November 13. The focus of the week will be on new member orientation and party leadership elections in both chambers. House Democrats intend to delay their elections until Thursday, November 29.

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

HOUSE AND SENATE CONTROL REMAINS THE SAME; LAWMAKERS GEAR UP FOR LAME DUCK SESSION

With the election concluded, policymakers are gearing up for the lame duck session. At the top of a lengthy to-do list will be finding a way to avoid the end-of-year “fiscal cliff” of large, automatic across-the-board cuts in defense and nondefense spending—“the sequester”—and expiring tax benefits.

AAU and the broader higher education community have called on the President and congressional leaders to forge a balanced, long-term deficit-reduction agreement and avoid the sequester. Last month, the Task Force on American Innovation, in which AAU participates, urged Washington leaders to reach such an agreement and to continue to prioritize spending on science and technology. In July, AAU joined the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) and more than 150 university leaders from all 50 states in sending a letter to policymakers calling for a major, balanced budget deal that also preserves the ability to sustain national investments in such areas as education and scientific research.
OTHER CONGRESSIONAL ISSUES

ASSOCIATIONS URGE POLICYMAKERS TO CHANGE EXPORT CONTROL TREATMENT OF SATELLITES NEW

Three higher education associations, including AAU, wrote to leaders of the Senate Armed Services Committee on November 8, to express their support for changing export control policies for satellites and related items. They said in their letter that the blanket statutory requirement that places all satellites on the U.S. Munitions List (USML)—even those that are dual-use and pose minimal national security risks—harms the conduct of space science research at U.S. universities.

AAU, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, and the Council on Governmental Relations told the lawmakers that they strongly support the Safeguarding United States Leadership and Security Act of 2012 (S. 3211), introduced by Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO). The measure would return to the executive branch the authority to determine the export control jurisdictional status of satellites and related items. The three organizations asked the Senators to consider including similar language in the final FY13 defense authorization bill.

The letter added, “The research university community agrees with the need to protect truly sensitive satellites and space-related technologies and other items; these items should remain on the USML in accordance with the Section 1248 report…” It added, “As the educators of the next generation of scientists, engineers, and innovators, the research university community strongly supports moving less sensitive satellite and space-related technologies from the USML to the Commerce Control List.”

MARYLAND APPROVES DREAM ACT

Voters in Maryland on Tuesday approved a state ballot provision that will create a path for undocumented students to obtain in-state tuition rates at the state’s four-year colleges and universities. This is a state version of the so-called DREAM (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) Act, which was first introduced on a bipartisan basis at the federal level in 2001, but has not been approved by Congress.

To be eligible for the tuition discount in Maryland, undocumented students must have attended a Maryland high school for at least three years and meet other conditions. Unlike the law in other states, reports the Washington Post, the students must also have earned an associate degree or 60 hours of credit at a community college.

Maryland is the first state to approve such a law through legislation and a popular vote, says the Post, and is now among a dozen other states with similar laws and policies. The publication notes that Texas, under Governor Rick Perry, was the first state to institute such a policy.

AAU has expressed support for enactment of the DREAM Act, both at the federal level and by the individual states.

EXECUTIVE BRANCH
In what has turned out to be a status quo election, President Barack Obama on Tuesday was re-elected to a second term in office, while Democrats held onto control of the Senate and Republicans retained control of the House.

The President indicated in his acceptance speech that research and education would continue to be among his priorities. He said:

“…But despite all our differences, most of us share certain hopes for America's future. We want our kids to grow up in a country where they have access to the best schools and the best teachers, a country that lives up to its legacy as the global leader in technology and discovery and innovation, with all the good jobs and new businesses that follow.

He added:

“…We believe in a generous America, in a compassionate America, in a tolerant America, open to the dreams of an immigrant's daughter who studies in our schools and pledges to our flag. To the young boy on the south side of Chicago who sees a life beyond the nearest street corner. To the furniture worker's child in North Carolina who wants to become a doctor or a scientist, an engineer or an entrepreneur, a diplomat or even a president – that's the future we hope for. That's the vision we share. That's where we need to go – forward…”

OTHER

BOSTON UNIVERSITY JOINS AAU

AAU announced on November 5 that Boston University has joined the association. The addition brings the association's membership to 62 institutions, 60 in the U.S. and two in Canada. Thirty-six of the members, including the two Canadian institutions, are public universities, and 26 are private.

Boston University’s acceptance of the invitation to join AAU followed the association's semiannual membership meeting in Washington, D.C. In a vote that took place during and after the meeting, the AAU presidents and chancellors voted to extend the membership invitation to the university. Additional information about the announcement, AAU membership, and related issues is available here.

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