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CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE NEW

The House today approved the STEM Jobs Act of 2012 (see item below). Next week’s legislative program has not been announced.

The Senate today continued consideration of the FY13 defense authorization bill (S. 3254) and will resume debate on Monday, December 3.

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

STATUS OF “FISCAL CLIFF” NEGOTIATIONS REMAINS UNCLEAR NEW

Even as pressure builds on Democratic and Republican leaders in Washington to reach a deal to avoid the year-end “fiscal cliff,” it remains unclear if they are making any real progress toward an agreement. The two sides continue to talk past one another in public, with Democrats focusing on the President’s proposal to extend the expiring Bush-era tax cuts for all but the top two-percent of earners and Republicans focusing on the need for budget cuts, particularly in entitlements. Time is running short. In a little over a month, all of the Bush-era tax cuts and other tax benefits will expire and sequestration – across-the-board cuts in defense and nondefense spending – will kick in.
In the meantime, the research university community continues its efforts to urge Washington policymakers to reach a major, balanced deficit reduction agreement that prevents the across-the-board spending cuts. Some of these activities are discussed below.

**AAU, APLU, TSC LAUNCH WEBSITE ON RESEARCH IMPACT OF THE SEQUESTER NEW**

AAU, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), and The Science Coalition have launched a website to inform policymakers and the public about the devastating impact of the budget sequester on university research. The ScienceWorksForU.S. website provides data on the impact of the sequester on research at member universities in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The site also features news articles, op-eds, and reports about research and the sequester, as well as background on the catalytic role of federally funded research in today’s economy.

**FOUR UNIVERSITY AND BUSINESS LEADERS URGE DEFICIT REDUCTION DEAL**

Four university and business leaders, including AAU President Hunter Rawlings, sent a letter to President Obama and congressional leaders on November 27 urging them to address the long-term fiscal crisis while “maintaining the nation’s ability to invest in its future.”

Joining President Rawlings in sending the letter were Norman R. Augustine, retired chairman and CEO of Lockheed Martin; Deborah Wince-Smith, president of the Council on Competitiveness; and Peter McPherson, president of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU).

The letter, which is similar to a statement issued in 2011 by some of the same individuals, argues that a real solution to the nation’s long-term fiscal challenge must focus on entitlements, particularly the health entitlements, as the real drivers of increased federal spending, and on tax reform that encourages economic growth and provides additional revenue. It specifies that deficit reduction cannot continue to focus on discretionary spending. The letter adds:

> “Nondefense discretionary spending includes nearly all of the government’s investments in the nation’s future, such as education, research, and infrastructure. These investments are the foundation for future economic growth and warrant greater support, not further cuts that would greatly damage our nation’s long-term prosperity.”

**AAU AND APLU RESEND POLICYMAKERS BUDGET LETTER FROM 150 UNIVERSITY LEADERS NEW**

Last week, AAU President Hunter Rawlings and APLU President Peter McPherson resent to Washington leaders a letter from more than 150 research universities urging them to reach such an agreement. The letter also was sent to every congressional office. The letter was originally sent to the President and Congressional leaders last July.
ACS CREATES VIDEO ON IMPACT OF SEQUESTER ON SCIENCE

The American Chemical Society (ACS) has created an animated YouTube video on the harmful impact of the fiscal cliff on science and research funding.

ASSOCIATIONS URGE CAUTION IN ADDRESSING CHARITABLE DEDUCTION CHANGES

A group of 16 higher education associations, including AAU, sent a letter to the President and congressional leaders urging them to “proceed cautiously when considering changes to the current charitable deduction.” The letter, led by the American Council on Education, notes the importance of charitable contributions to the missions of higher education institutions, including student access, teaching, groundbreaking research, technological innovation, and public service. It asks policymakers to preserve strong federal tax incentives for charitable giving and avoid harm to students, as well as to the colleges and universities that serve them and the nation.

OTHER CONGRESSIONAL ISSUES

HOUSE APPROVES STEM IMMIGRATION BILL

The House today approved the STEM Jobs Act (H.R. 6429), which would allocate 55,000 green cards each year for immigrants who have earned advanced degrees at U.S. institutions in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. The final vote was 245 to 139. During consideration of the measure, the House defeated by a vote of 157 to 231 a motion to recommit the bill offered by Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-CA).

CQ reports that the bill is going nowhere in the lame duck session because Senate Democrats and the White House want to make the issue part of comprehensive immigration reform next year. They also oppose a provision in the bill that would make the 55,000 STEM visas available by ending the annual green-card lottery for individuals in countries that have had low immigration rates.

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

PCAST ISSUES REPORT ON FUTURE OF U.S. RESEARCH ENTERPRISE

The President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) today released a report on what it terms, “specific opportunities for the Federal Government, universities, and industry to strengthen the U.S. research enterprise.”

The report, “Transformation and Opportunity: The Future of the U.S. Research Enterprise,” calls for a number of actions, including: increasing the nation’s total R&D expenditures; finding a means to increase the stability and predictability of federal research funding, including for infrastructure and facilities; making permanent the research and experimentation tax credit; ramping up efforts to eliminate unnecessary federal regulations and policies, especially those that reduce the productivity of the nation’s research
universities; and encouraging adoption of empirically validated best practices in the teaching of undergraduate STEM education. The report adds that federal policies must support the ability of the U.S. to attract and retain top international students and researchers through such means as providing STEM graduates from U.S. universities with fast-tracked, long-term visas.

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