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CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE  NEW

Neither the House nor Senate met today, nor have their leaders yet announced the floor schedules for next week. As discussed below, however, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) has said he expects to begin debate Monday on the Senate FY13 appropriations measure.

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

CONGRESS MAKING PROGRESS ON NEW FY13 APPROPRIATIONS MEASURE  UPDATED

House and Senate appropriators are working to try to ensure that Congress approves an FY13 appropriations bill to fund federal government agencies after the current continuing resolution (CR) expires on March 27, reports Politico. Leaders in both chambers, as well as the President, want to avoid the threat of a government shutdown when the CF expires. The new bill would run through the rest of the fiscal year.

The House approved its version of the measure (H.R. 933) on March 6 by a vote of 267 to 151, with most Republicans voting for it and most Democrats voting against it. The measure would lock in the $85 billion in across-the-board FY13 sequester cuts, but includes full-year appropriations bills for the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs to give those agencies greater flexibility in allocating their sequester cuts.

Senate appropriators are devising an FY13 bill that also reflects the sequester cuts, but includes full-year appropriations bills for at least some domestic agencies. Committee Chair Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) said on March 7 that, along with the separate bills for Defense and Veterans Affairs, Democrats would include separate appropriations bills for Agriculture, Homeland Security, and Commerce-Justice-Science in the “hybrid” bill they are developing. These are the
least controversial of the major spending bills. Commerce-Justice-Science includes funding for the National Science Foundation (NSF) and NASA. But programs funded through the Labor-HHS-Education (such as the National Institutes of Health) would “remain locked in a rigid funding format first dictated by a continuing resolution adopted last fall,” reports Politico.

Senator Mikulski said she will unveil the text of her funding bill on Monday, March 11, reports CQ.com, and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) plans to begin debate on the measure that day.

AAU UPDATES TAX POLICY DOCUMENTS

AAU has updated its set of background documents on tax issues of interest to research universities. These include a summary of the issues as well as 13 individual documents that cover such areas as the charitable deduction, the American Opportunity Tax Credit, and tax-exempt financing.

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

GAO STUDY SHOWS OVERLAPPING AGENCY REVIEWS OF DUAL USE RESEARCH

A study published by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) on January 31 shows that facilities that are part of the Select Agent program, including universities with laboratories that work with select agents, are subject to multiple and overlapping inspections by various government agencies. The Select Agent program oversees the possession and use of potentially harmful pathogens and toxins as part of the government’s effort to prevent and respond to bioterrorism.

AAU and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) called for harmonizing inspections in the comments they submitted in December 2011 on the Select Agents rule revision. The two associations cited the regulatory burden and disruption caused by duplicative inspections. In their response to GAO, the relevant agencies concurred with the GAO’s conclusion and noted that they were working on improved coordination.

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