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CONTENTS

CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE  NEW

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS
Congress Makes Progress on FY13 CR/Appropriations Package  UPDATED
--The Current CR
--The House and Senate FY13 Bills
--Senate Modifications for Science Agency and Higher Education Budgets
--Senators Coburn and McCain Seek to Defund NSF Political Science Research  NEW
--AAU Expresses Strong Opposition to Coburn-McCain Amendment  NEW
AAU and APLU Urge Senate Appropriators to Pass FY13 Omnibus Funding Bill
House FY14 Budget Plan Would Balance Budget with Spending Cuts  UPDATED
Senate FY14 Budget Plan Calls for Combination of Spending Cuts, New Revenues  UPDATED

CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE  NEW

The House met today; the Senate did not. Both chambers are expected to return to session on Monday, March 25. Senate leaders hope to complete action that day on the FY13 appropriations bill/continuing resolution (see next item). The House floor schedule has not yet been announced.

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

CONGRESS MAKES PROGRESS ON FY13 CR/APPROPRIATIONS PACKAGE  UPDATED

Congress is making progress on legislation to sustain government funding after the current continuing resolution (CR) expires on March 27, and thus avoid the threat of a government shutdown. The House approved its version of the measure (H.R. 933) on March 6, and the Senate is currently considering its amended version of that bill. Senate Appropriations Committee leaders have been working with their House counterparts to create a bill that can pass both chambers, reports CQ.com.

Senate Democrats had hoped the chamber would approve the package this week, but a round of nearly 100 amendments has delayed final action. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) has asked the bill managers to work over the weekend to develop a smaller list of amendments, with the goal of completing action on the bill on Monday, March 25. Senate leaders would then
The Hybrid CR Package

The current CR has been funding federal programs at largely their FY12 levels, with few program changes, since the fiscal year began on October 1. The CR was put in place because Congress was unable to give final approval to any of the FY13 appropriations bills. The inflexibility of the CR in extending current funding levels and rules makes it difficult for federal agencies to manage their budgets, a problem that has been compounded in FY13 by the $85 billion in across-the-board cuts required by the sequester.

The House and Senate FY13 Bills

The House-passed bill includes full-year bills for two of the 12 appropriations measures—Defense and Military-Construction-Veterans Affairs—which provides the Defense and Veterans Affairs Departments updated spending priorities and greater flexibility to manage their sequester cuts. The Senate package accepts those two bills and adds the FY13 funding bills for Agriculture, Homeland Security, and Commerce-Justice-Science, three bills that the House and Senate largely agree on. (Among the agencies that thus benefit from having an appropriations bill are the National Science Foundation and NASA.) The appropriations bills move funds around (see below) and provide additional management flexibility, but they do not negate the sequester for those agencies.

The Senate measure also includes a number of anomalies, which are limited changes to certain programs and funding levels for agencies covered not by full-year bills but by the CR portion of the legislation. Senator Mikulski calls these anomalies “very limited changes to fix pressing problems.” The anomalies are generally modest, however, and also do not negate the sequester. The agencies in this category include the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Department of Energy.

Senate Modifications for Science Agency and Higher Education Budgets

The Senate measure includes funding and program changes for several research agencies and student aid programs, through both the appropriations bills included in the package and budget anomalies for programs funded through the CR. (Pell Grants are exempt from the sequester in FY13). Here is some of the information available at this writing.

- **National Science Foundation (NSF):** The Senate bill would add $221 million for NSF in FY13, raising its budget to $7.25 billion. After the sequester, however, its estimated budget would be $6.88 billion. FY12 funding was about $7 billion.

- **NASA:** The Senate bill would fund the space agency at $17.52 billion, which agency officials estimate would be reduced to $16.65 billion under the sequester. This compares to the FY12 budget of $17.7 billion.

- **Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI):** The bill would increase AFRI funding by $25 million to $290 million, before the sequester. The Department indicates that the
sequester would reduce the budget to about $274 million, for an INCREASE of $10 million over FY12 funding.

- **Department of Energy Office of Science.** A Senate anomaly would CUT $44 million from the Department of Energy, before the sequester. This amounts to cuts of $13 million from the DOE Office of Science, $10 million from ARPA-E, $11 million from Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, and $10 million from Nuclear Energy. (In FY12, the DOE Office of Science budget was $4.84 billion, ARPA-E was $275 million, EERE was $1.8 billion, and Nuclear Energy was $765 million.)

- **National Institutes of Health:** NIH is funded through the CR, but an anomaly in the Senate bill would increase its budget by $71 million, before the $1.6 billion in sequester cuts are imposed. NIH funding in FY12 was about $31 billion.

Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) offered an amendment on the floor that would have, among several other changes, raised the pre-sequester increase for NIH to $221 million. (The amendment failed by a vote of 54-45, with 60 votes needed for approval.)

For higher education, Senator Harkin’s amendment also would have added $14 million to the otherwise level-funded TRIO program, partially restore Pell Grant eligibility for career pathway students, provide $25 million for the Administration’s First in the World competition for higher education eligibility and completion, and add $1 million for the study of higher education regulations that AAU has promoted for the past several years. The amendment would have paid for the increases with a .127 percent across-the-board cut in programs funded through the Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill. (These figures also do not factor in the sequester).

- **Javits Fellowships.** An anomaly allows continuation awards for Javits Fellowship recipients under the Graduate Assistance of Areas of National Need program, which Congress consolidated last year. The language enables 100 Javits recipients to receive their last year of funding.

**--Senators Coburn and McCain Seek to Defund NSF Political Science Research**  
NEW
Senators Tom Coburn (R-OK) and John McCain (R-AZ) developed an amendment to the FY13 appropriations bill/CR that would eliminate NSF funding for political science research, diverting $7 million of the $10 million total to the National Cancer Institute. Regarding consideration of the amendment, a statement on the Senate Democrats’ website indicates that Senator Coburn rejected a vote on a modified version of his amendment. The nature of the modification was unspecified. It is unclear if and in what form the amendment might be taken up when Senate floor debate continues on Monday.

**--AAU Expresses Strong Opposition to Coburn-McCain Amendment**  
NEW
Last night, AAU sent Senate Appropriations Committee leaders a letter expressing strong opposition to the Coburn-McCain amendment. “The amendment sets up a false dichotomy between medical research and research in the social sciences that we emphatically reject,” said AAU President Hunter Rawlings in the letter. He added that political science research is important to the country, helping to inform legislative decisions about election processes such as funding, redistricting, voting rights and obligations, and nomination processes. Moreover, the amendment “sets a very bad precedent by simply eliminating funding for an entire area of peer-reviewed research.”
AAU AND APLU URGE SENATE APPROPRIATORS TO PASS FY13 OMNIBUS FUNDING BILL

AAU and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) sent a letter to Senate Appropriations Committee leaders on March 8 urging them to pass an omnibus appropriations bill for FY13 rather than a continuing resolution (CR). An omnibus appropriations bill would provide full-year FY13 appropriations bills for all federal agencies. As the associations said in their letter, enactment of an omnibus appropriations bills would mark a “return to rationality in the appropriations process” and “allow Congress to carry out its responsibility to determine spending and investment priorities for the fiscal year rather than defaulting to the status quo and allowing federal investments in key areas to erode by way of neglect and inflation.” They praised senators for moving in the direction of an omnibus bill by providing full-year bills for additional agencies, and they asked the two leaders to give priority in the final bill to student financial aid and scientific research.

HOUSE FY14 BUDGET PLAN WOULD BALANCE BUDGET WITH SPENDING CUTS

House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan (R-WI) introduced his FY14 budget resolution on March 12, with the goal of balancing the federal budget in 10 years while protecting defense spending and not raising additional taxes. The measure was approved in committee on March 13 by a party-line vote, with full House consideration expected next week.

Among the ways the plan proposes to balance the budget in 10 years are extending the caps on discretionary spending for an additional two years (through FY23), repealing the health care law, turning Medicare into a voucher support system, and converting food stamps and Medicaid into block-grants to the states.

Rep. Ryan’s plan also calls for transferring significant discretionary spending from the domestic side of the budget to the defense side, reports CQ.com. The proposal would limit domestic discretionary spending in FY14 to $414 billion, which is more than $50 billion less than it would be under both the BCA cap and the sequester. Defense programs would receive $552 billion, which the publication says would essentially wipe out the effects of the sequester. Since the budget resolution is not signed into law by the President, reports CQ.com, this change in the Budget Control Act would require enactment of other legislation.

SENATE FY14 BUDGET PLAN CALLS FOR COMBINATION OF SPENDING CUTS, NEW REVENUES

In sharp contrast to Rep. Ryan’s budget plan, the FY14 budget resolution introduced on March 13 by Senate Budget Committee Chair Patty Murray (D-WA) would raise tax revenues by about $975 billion and cut spending by about the same amount over the next 10 years. The plan, which does not aim to balance the federal budget, also calls for replacing the sequester with a mix of different spending cuts and tax increases, as well as $100 billion in new spending on infrastructure and job training. Among other savings, the package calls for reducing defense
spending by $240 billion over 10 years and reducing nondefense discretionary spending by $142 billion over that period, reports National Journal.

The Senate Budget Committee began consideration of the measure on March 13 and approved the measure the next day on a party line vote. Senator Murray plans to take the budget resolution to the Senate floor next week, where a lengthy vote-a-rama is expected, reports CQ.com. The publication adds that because a budget resolution is privileged, only 51 votes would be needed for Senate approval. (Most legislation considered in the Senate in recent years has required a super-majority of 60 votes to pass.)

Given the opposition from Senate Republicans and concerns about the re-election prospects of some Democrats in Republican-leaning states, reports Politico, Senate approval is not assured.

Even if Senate Democrats are able to pass their FY14 budget resolution, the wide divergence between the House and Senate plans throws strong doubt on the ability of Congress to pass an FY14 budget resolution and avoid the type of last-minute budget deals that have characterized the last few years. While President Obama appears to hope that the FY14 budget process can help produce the grand deficit-reduction bargain on taxes and entitlements that he has been promoting in Congress, reports Politico, congressional approval of a budget resolution would require congressional leaders to “overcome enormous partisan divides.”

Meanwhile, the White House is expected to release its FY14 budget proposal the week of April 8, reports Bloomberg.com.

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