CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE  NEW

The House met today to consider legislation concerning the National Labor Relations Board (H.R. 1120); the floor schedule for next week has not yet been announced. The Senate did not meet today; when it returns to session on Monday, April 15, the chamber will begin floor debate on gun legislation (S. 649).

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

PRESIDENT’S FY14 BUDGET STRONGLY SUPPORTS RESEARCH AND EDUCATION  NEW

The FY14 budget released by President Obama on April 10 would maintain strong investments in research and education, while seeking to replace budget cuts under the sequester with alternative means of deficit reduction.

The budget plan would increase funding for the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy Office of Science, Department of Defense basic research, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and some key student financial aid programs, including full funding for Pell Grants.

In a statement issued the same day, AAU President Hunter Rawlings said, “The President’s budget offers hope that the nation will continue to make science and education investments a top national priority while taking serious steps to reduce budget deficits.”
The statement, along with the Association’s overview of notable elements in the budget and a budget chart of AAU funding priorities, can be found here. AAU will add additional material over the next several days.

The President’s FY14 budget of $3.77 trillion assumes that all of the sequester cuts, including those in FY13, will be repealed, to be superseded by a combination of tax and entitlement program changes going forward, as well as $200 billion in further discretionary spending cuts that would begin in FY17, taken equally from defense and nondefense spending. The White House says its proposed savings would provide $1.8 trillion in deficit reduction over 10 years.

(The sequester’s cuts in FY13 were across-the-board. From FY14 through FY21, the sequester is not across the board but instead reduces the discretionary spending caps established by the Budget Control Act of 2011. In assuming that the sequester will be repealed, the President’s FY14 budget proposes spending levels that exceed the caps now in effect due to the sequester.)

The budget arrived nine weeks late and two weeks after the House and Senate had already passed their respective FY14 budget resolutions. The Administration attributes the late release of the budget to the congressional delay in resolving final FY13 appropriations, as well as the budget sequester, which went into effect on March 1.

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS LOOK AT NEXT STEPS IN FY14 BUDGET PROCESS

Following release of the President’s FY14 budget on April 10, the chairs of the House and Senate budget committees met to discuss the possibility of forming a conference committee to work out a single FY14 budget resolution. In a joint statement they issued that day, House Budget Committee Chair Paul Ryan (R-WI) and Senate Budget Committee Chair Patty Murray (D-WA) said they recognized the challenge of addressing the many differences between their two budget plans, but were “committed to working to find a common ground.”

While a compromise between the widely different budget resolutions seems unlikely at this point, release of the President’s FY14 budget—which includes entitlement spending cuts that Republican policymakers have supported—has raised some hope that Republicans and Democrats might finally achieve a broad deficit-reduction deal that includes cuts in spending, entitlement reform, and new revenues.

In that vein, a group of Senators is considering the revival of a bipartisan group of Senators to work on a grand deficit-reduction deal, reports Politico. They have seen the success of similar bipartisan Senate groups in finding common ground on immigration reform and dealing with gun violence, and believe the time might be right for a small group to again try to achieve a budget breakthrough. (The publication notes that the so-called Gang of Eight worked to negotiate a budget deal for two years up until the President and House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) began their negotiations in 2012 to avoid the fiscal cliff.)

RESEARCH ADVOCATES STAGE SUCCESSFUL RALLY FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH

NEW
Advocates for biomedical research held the Rally for Medical Research in downtown Washington, D.C. on April 8 to raise public awareness about the importance of sustained federal investments in scientific research through the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The rally, which was attended by nearly 10,000 advocates, researchers, physicians, and others, featured journalist Cokie Roberts, Reps. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) and Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), and actress Maura Tierney. Statements of support from two legislators who were unable to attend the rally—Senator Jerry Moran (R-KS) and Rep. David McKinley (R-WVA)—and from President Obama were read aloud at the event.

OTHER

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES PLANS PUBLIC MEETINGS ON PUBLIC ACCESS ISSUE NEW

On behalf of several federal research agencies, the National Academy of Sciences will hold two public meetings to take comments on how the agencies might best increase public access to the results of federally funded research. Federal agencies were directed to figure out how to increase access in a White House memorandum issued February 22, 2013.

The two sessions will be held on May 16 and May 17 in the National Academy of Sciences auditorium in Washington, D.C. Additional information about the sessions and about how to register to attend is available here.

AAAS PUBLISHES REPORT ON BIOSECURITY ISSUES NEW

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) has published the proceedings of a workshop held February 4-5, 2013, on the biosecurity challenges of foreign scientists working or studying in the U.S., international collaboration, and U.S. scientists working in other countries.

The workshop, which was co-hosted by AAAS, AAU, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI) Weapons of Mass Destruction Directorate, is part of the FBI’s initiative to communicate with universities about ways to mitigate biosafety and biosecurity risks.

Also available on the AAAS website are proceedings of the first meeting of the group in February, 2012, and proceedings from a September, 2012 workshop on the oversight of dual use life sciences research.

COMMISSION ON DISTANCE EDUCATION RELEASES FINAL REPORT NEW

The Commission on Regulation of Postsecondary Distance Education released its final report on April 11, with recommendations designed to reduce the cost and inefficiencies of multiple state distance education regulations and develop a new system of interstate reciprocity. The Commission will hold an implementation symposium for all 50 states April 16-17.
The Commission, which was established in May 2012 by the State Higher Education Executive Officers and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, is headed by former Secretary of Education Richard Riley. The panel includes 20 members from academia, accreditation agencies, and state government.

End of document

Please visit us at www.aau.edu and follow us on Twitter at @AAUniversities.