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CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE  NEW
The House and Senate met today. The House is expected to be in session on Saturday to work on the FY14 continuing resolution (CR), which is needed to keep the government funded when Fiscal Year 2014 begins next Tuesday, October 1. It is not known at this time when the Senate will reconvene. (See item below.)

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

THE THREAT OF A GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN CONTINUES  NEW
The House and Senate continue their partisan showdown over funding of federal agencies for FY14, leaving open the potential for a government shutdown at the end of the day on Monday, September 30, when FY13 funding runs out. The Democratic-led Senate today approved the FY14 continuing resolution (CR) that the House approved last Friday (H.J. Res. 59), after removing the House provision aimed at defunding the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and with a new expiration date of November 15 rather than December 15. The final Senate vote was 54 to 44, on a strictly party-line basis.

House Republican leaders have not said if they will try to move the Senate-passed version of the CR through the House tomorrow—saving the battle over the ACA for another vehicle, such as legislation needed to raise the debt limit by mid-October—or if they will modify the CR and send it back to the Senate for further debate.
The short timeframe for congressional action before October 1 increases the possibility of a government shutdown for some period of time, particularly because President Obama has said he would veto a CR with the ACA defunding provision attached.

The House-passed CR would fund most federal programs at their current post-sequester FY13 levels, at a total annual level of $986.3 billion.

INDUSTRY GROUPS WEIGH IN ON “INNOVATION DEFICIT”  NEW

A group of 14 business associations, led by the Semiconductor Industry Association, sent a letter to the President and Members of Congress on September 19 urging them to close the innovation deficit by “recommitting to robust and sustained investments in basic research…” The industry groups’ letter echoed – and specifically referenced – the letter, now signed by more than 200 university presidents and chancellors, that AAU and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) sent to policymakers and published in Politico on July 31.

AAU and APLU have added more information to their fact sheet on the innovation deficit, which is available here on the associations’ joint Innovation Deficit website.

OTHER CONGRESSIONAL ISSUES

ASSOCIATIONS HOLD SUCCESSFUL CAPITOL HILL BRIEFING ON U.S. GLOBAL COMPETENCE

At a Capitol Hill briefing on September 17, more than 60 people, including at least 20 congressional staff members, heard about the importance of international and foreign language education to sustaining the nation’s economic competitiveness and meeting such challenges as global health, environmental protection, law enforcement, and food production.

“U.S. Global Competence: The Role of International and Foreign Language Education” was organized by the Coalition for International Education and the National Council for Languages and International Studies. The session was cosponsored by AAU, APLU, and the American Council on Education.

The program, a briefing paper, and the speaker presentations and biographies are available here.

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

DEPT. OF EDUCATION ISSUES GUIDANCE ON CAMPUS EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE DIVERSITY  NEW

The Department of Education today issued new guidance that provides colleges and universities with information about the Supreme Court’s ruling on campus diversity in Fisher v. University of Texas, and reiterates the Departments’ position on the voluntary use of race to achieve diversity in higher education. The guidance—in the form of questions and answers about the Supreme
Court’s decision—is the Department’s first policy clarification on the use of race in higher education since the U.S. Supreme Court made its decision in June.

As part of its announcement, the Department also sent a Dear Colleague letter to college and university presidents and chancellors, alerting them to the new material.

SEC RULE ON MUNICIPAL ADVISORS EXEMPTS UNIVERSITY BOARDS, STAFF FROM REGISTERING NEW

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has issued a final rule that exempts university board members and university staff from having to register as “municipal advisors” when they are acting within the scope of their official capacities. The exemption applies to both elected and appointed trustees and to both public and private nonprofit institutions. The process has taken more than two years.

As the American Council on Education described in comments submitted to the SEC in February 2011, on behalf of AAU and other higher education associations:

“Colleges and universities finance crucial facilities and educational projects through the municipal securities market. If the final rule is not clarified, tens of thousands of employees and trustees of higher education institutions and affiliated nonprofit entities could be required to register with the Commission. Such an interpretation would have harmful consequences for American higher education. ACE respectfully requests that employees and trustees of higher education institutions and their affiliated entities be excluded from the definition of “municipal advisor” in the final rule.”

OTHER

AAAS SEEKS CANDIDATES FOR EARLY CAREER AWARD FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WITH SCIENCE

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) is seeking candidates for this year’s AAAS Early Career Award for Public Engagement with Science.

The award recognizes university researchers with less than seven years in the field who have worked to engage with the public on science and technology issues. Types of public engagement include informal science education, public policy, and communication activities through radio, TV, film, and social and online media. Nominations are due before midnight on October 15.

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