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CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE  NEW

The House and Senate met today, but at this writing, neither had conducted substantive business. The Senate is scheduled to be in session tomorrow, Saturday, to vote on whether to proceed to a bill to raise the debt limit (see next item below). The House could meet as well.

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

BUDGET TALKS CONTINUE  NEW

Although President Obama and House Republicans reached no agreement in their meeting late yesterday on how to end the budget stalemate and re-open the government, the meeting is recognized as an important step toward a resolution. House Republicans have since revised their initial proposal to include a short-term restoration of federal funding and a short-term increase in the government debt ceiling, in exchange for setting up a framework for broader budget talks.

In the Senate, Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) has filed for cloture on a clean bill to raise the debt ceiling through 2015, which could be considered in a Saturday session. The publication reports that the measure, which would require six Republicans to pass, is widely expected to fail. Republican Senators met with the President today. A number of Senate Republicans and Democrats are reportedly discussing a plan for resolving the deadlock proposed by Senator Susan Collins (R-ME).

TASK FORCE ON AMERICAN INNOVATION URGES POLICYMAKERS TO CLOSE THE INNOVATION DEFICIT  NEW
The Task Force on American Innovation (TFAI), an alliance of business, scientific, and higher education institutions and associations, sent a letter to the President and Congress today urging them to resolve their disagreements over budget issues in a way that closes the nation’s innovation deficit.

The Task Force, in which AAU participates, warned that failing to close the innovation deficit—the widening gap between needed and actual federal investments in research and education in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields—would have devastating consequences for the U.S. economy and imperil the nation’s role as global innovation leader.

The Task Force’s letter follows two letters to President Obama and Congress urging them to close the innovation deficit, one signed by more than 200 U.S. university presidents and the other from more than a dozen national business associations.

Additional information about the ongoing efforts to close the innovation deficit can be found here.

HIGHER EDUCATION ASSOCIATIONS ISSUE STATEMENT ON SHUTDOWN OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The six presidentially based higher education associations, including AAU, sent a joint statement to campuses yesterday expressing deep concerns about the effects on the nation of the ongoing political paralysis in Washington, D.C.

The letter decries the growing resignation of Americans that the dysfunction in the national political process is the “new normal” and should be ignored or ridiculed. The letter adds:

“We believe this gradual acceptance of government dysfunction should be vigorously challenged and that each college and university can play a role in doing so. We call on higher education institutions around the country to engage in conversations, lectures, and events, both on and off campus, that bring together students, business and community leaders, and the public. We should focus attention on the processes that ensure responsible government and sound budget policy.”

OTHER CONGRESSIONAL ISSUES

MORE THAN 300 GROUPS URGE REAUTHORIZATION OF AMERICA COMPETES ACT

A group of more than 300 academic, scientific, and business organizations from around the country sent a letter to four congressional authorization committees on October 9 urging them to provide real and sustained growth for research funding in the reauthorization of the America COMPETES Act. Those signing onto the letter included professional societies, higher education associations, business trade groups, and chambers of commerce from all 50 states.
The letter, which was sent to the House Science Committee, as well as the Senate Commerce, Energy, and HELP committees, urged the four panels to renew the federal government’s commitment to America’s research enterprise in order to help close the innovation deficit. To do so, said the letter, they should introduce and support an America COMPETES Act reauthorization that provides for “real and sustained growth in funding” for the National Science Foundation, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, the Department of Energy’s Office of Science, and ARPA-E (the research agencies included in the America COMPETES Act).

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