Neither chamber met today. The House will reconvene for legislative business on Tuesday, October 22. The Senate will be out of session next week, reconvening on Monday, October 28.

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

LAWMAKERS END GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN, AVERT IMMEDIATE THREAT OF DEFAULT  UPDATED

After a partial government shutdown extending more than two weeks, Congress late on October 16 finally approved a continuing resolution (CR) (H.R. 2775) that allowed the government to reopen and ensured that the nation did not default on its debt the following day.

Following a last-minute agreement negotiated by Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY), the final measure extended federal funding for FY14 through January 15 at its current FY13, post-sequester level of $986 billion, and raised the debt limit through February 7. Although House Republicans had for some time opposed enactment of a CR unless it included provisions to delay or defund the Affordable Care Act (ACA), the final agreement simply imposes stricter income verification requirements for individuals receiving subsidies under the ACA. In the end, House and Senate Democrats voted unanimously in favor of the legislation; among Republicans, the bill was opposed by a significant minority in the Senate and a significant majority in the House.

As part of the agreement, the House and Senate budget committee chairs will convene a conference committee to try to hammer out a compromise FY14 budget resolution to cover the rest of the fiscal year. The panel may also try to negotiate what changes in entitlement spending...
and tax policies could replace some or all of the sequester savings required in FY14 and possibly provide additional deficit reduction.

The conference is likely to be difficult. Among other differences is the $91 billion gap in funding levels between the House and Senate versions of the FY14 budget resolution. The House-passed measure would fund discretionary spending at the $967 billion level agreed to in the Budget Control Act (BCA), but would shift all of the required cuts in defense spending to the domestic side of the budget, rather than divide the cuts equally between defense and nondefense. In contrast, the Senate FY14 budget resolution ignores the sequestration cuts required by the BCA and sets the top-line discretionary spending level at $1.058 trillion. The differences in House and Senate spending totals were also reflected in the FY14 appropriations bills, none of which were enacted.

LEON PANETTA, HUNTER RAWLINGS, OTHERS URGE LONG-TERM BUDGET DEAL  UPDATED

At a press conference on October 16, AAU President Hunter Rawlings joined former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, former Office of Management and Budget Director Jim Nussle, and other organization heads to urge Washington policymakers to end budget sequestration and seriously address the nation’s long-term debt by enacting entitlement and tax reforms that would produce spending savings and additional revenues.

President Rawlings (see video clip) noted that Congress did not set out to cut research funding, but such cuts have been the result of not only the current budget sequester and the failure to fund the government since the beginning of October but also discretionary spending cuts over the past several years. The disinvestment in research, he said, has created an innovation deficit, which endangers our ability to continue to make the kind of technological advances that have been fundamental to economic growth and security.

The press conference was sponsored by Fix the Debt, a nonpartisan group that promotes the need for a comprehensive plan to fix the nation’s long-term debt and deficits. The group was founded by former White House Chief of Staff and University of North Carolina system president Erskine Bowles and former U.S. Senator Alan Simpson (R-WY), who together co-chaired the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform.

OTHER CONGRESSIONAL ISSUES

GROUPS URGE SCIENCE COMMITTEE CHAIR TO SUPPORT MERIT REVIEW AND ALL DISCIPLINES IN FEDERAL RESEARCH FUNDING  NEW

A group of 69 organizations and higher education institutions, including AAU, sent a letter to House Science, Space and Technology Chairman Lamar Smith (R-TX) on October 16 thanking him for recognizing the important contribution of the social and behavioral sciences in addressing critical societal issues. The letter, spearheaded by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, also urged the chairman to support merit review of research proposals considered by the National Science Foundation, and to support research funding for all scientific disciplines.
End of document

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