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CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE  NEW

The House was out of session this week and the Senate met today in pro forma session. Both chambers will reconvene on Tuesday, November 12.

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

BUDGET CONFERENCE COMMITTEE OFFERS LITTLE NEWS  NEW

In the run-up to their next public meeting on November 13, members of the House-Senate conference committee on the FY14 budget have said little about their ad hoc, small-group discussions. But there appears to be cautious optimism that the Republican and Democratic negotiators can reach an agreement on final spending for FY14 that eliminates some or all of the sequester cuts scheduled for this year and next. The panel has a target deadline of December 13 to come up with an agreement; the current FY14 continuing resolution expires on January 15.

AAU, APLU URGE FY14 BUDGET CONFEREES TO END SEQUESTER, HELP CLOSE THE INNOVATION DEFICIT

AAU and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) on November 4 sent a letter to the FY14 budget conference committee members urging them to reach an agreement that repeals the sequester, at least temporarily, and makes possible greater investments in research
and higher education in order to help close the innovation deficit. AAU President Hunter Rawlings and APLU President Peter McPherson wrote that the budget plan should include modest entitlement reforms that do not harm those in need. The letter said:

“Sequestration cuts to research and higher education, occurring at the very time when other nations such as China, Singapore, and Korea are dramatically increasing their investments in these areas, are creating an innovation deficit—the gap between needed and actual federal investments in research and higher education. Closing the innovation deficit is vital to the nation’s long-term health, national security, and economic growth.”

ACE-LED LETTER CALLS FOR REAFFIRMING FEDERAL SUPPORT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

The American Council on Education last week led a group of 34 higher education groups, including AAU, that called on the conference committee to eliminate the sequester and reaffirm “the federal commitment to higher education and research that placed the United States at the top of the global economy.” The letter notes:

“Innovation drives the American economy, and higher education and research and development drive innovation. Any solution to the nation’s long-term fiscal challenges will require strong and sustained economic growth. That growth depends upon a renewed federal investment in scientific research combined with a robust effort to prepare the high-skilled workforce our nation needs.”

OTHER CONGRESSIONAL ISSUES

SENATE COMMITTEE HEARS SUPPORT FOR STRONG COMPETES ACT REAUTHORIZATION UPDATED

At a hearing convened on November 6 by the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, Senators both heard and expressed strong support for reauthorizing the America COMPETES Act. Committee Chairman Jay Rockefeller (D-WVA) used his opening statement to refer to the new Science Coalition report, "Sparking Economic Growth 2.0," to show the vital role that federally funded research plays in creating new businesses and in stimulating the U.S. economy.

Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN), who was a major force behind passage of the original COMPETES Act in 2007, urged his colleagues to “finish the job” they began six years ago by authorizing a doubling of the budgets for the four research agencies included in the legislation. The agencies are the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy Office of Science, the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy, and the National Institutes of Standards and Technology.

Senator Alexander added that providing the appropriations committees with the legal authority to double funding for the COMPETES agencies would send the panels a clear signal that funding scientific research is a national priority. To help support his case, Senator Alexander entered into the record the letter endorsed by more than 300 academic, scientific, and business
institutions and associations in all 50 states that calls on the Commerce Committee to introduce and pass a strong America COMPETES Act to help close the nation’s innovation deficit. The innovation deficit is the gap between needed and actual federal investments in research and higher education.

The list of witnesses and their testimonies can be viewed [here](#).

**ASSOCIATIONS WEIGH IN ON HOUSE PATENT LITIGATION BILL**  NEW

The six higher education associations that have been working together on patent reform today issued a statement about the Innovation Act ([H.R. 3309](#)), legislation aimed at improving U.S. innovation and economic competitiveness by addressing abusive patent infringement lawsuits.

The associations’ statement thanks House Judiciary Committee Chairman Robert Goodlatte (R-VA) for the open, thoughtful process undertaken in developing the legislation, expresses strong support for the goals of the bill, delineates provisions of particular concern to universities, and offers recommendations for change. The statement notes that the overbroad scope of some of the provisions “raises the specter of unintended problems and thereby raises particular concerns for universities.” It adds, “We believe that H.R. 3309 has the potential, if properly crafted, to address this problem in significant ways, and we look forward to working with you to achieve such an outcome.”

The statement provides detailed analysis of several provisions in the bill, including those that deal with fee-shifting of legal costs, heightened pleading standards, increased transparency of patent ownership, and limitations on discovery.

The bipartisan measure, introduced by Chairman Robert Goodlatte (R-VA) and committee members Peter DeFazio (D-OR), Howard Coble (R-NC), and Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), was the subject of a committee hearing on October 29. ([See AAU Weekly Wrap-up, November 1, 2013.](#))

The six associations working together on patent reform are AAU, the American Council on Education, the Association of American Medical Colleges, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, the Association of University Technology Managers, and the Council on Governmental Relations.

**AAU URGES FARM BILL CONFEREES TO SUPPORT AFRI**

AAU sent House and Senate conferees on the farm bill a [letter](#) on November 6 that urged them to maintain strong support for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI). The letter also requested a modification in language contained in the House version of the bill that requires private universities, as well as some non-land-grant public universities, to provide a one-to-one funding match on competitive AFRI research grants. “For AFRI to remain a truly competitive program that supports the highest quality research,” said the letter, “it is important to maintain equal and nondiscriminatory eligibility requirements for all university grant applicants.”

AAU has worked closely with APLU on these issues.
U.S.-UK LAUNCH GLOBAL INNOVATION INITIATIVE FOR MULTILATERAL RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

The governments of the United States (U.S.) and United Kingdom (UK) have launched the Global Innovation Initiative, a new higher education grant competition created to strengthen higher education research partnerships between the U.S., the UK, and selected countries. The partner countries have been identified as Brazil, China, India and Indonesia. The initiative will provide university consortia with grant opportunities in science and technology. The grants will be on topics of global significance in four areas: energy, climate change, and the environment; agriculture, food security, and water; public health and wellbeing; and urbanization.

Two parallel, but separate grant competitions will be held in the U.S. and UK. Partnership proposals with a U.S. lead institution will apply through the U.S. competition and those with a UK lead institution will apply through the UK competition.

Additional information about the initiative, including how to submit an application, is available at: http://www.global-innovation-initiative.org. The application for both country competitions will be available on October 28, 2013 and is due on December 16, 2013. Grant recipients will be announced in early 2014.

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