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CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE   NEW

The House met today and approved legislation introduced by Rep. Fred Upton (R-MI) that would allow individuals to retain their existing health insurance plans (H.R. 3350). The measure was approved by a vote of 261 to 157, with 39 Democrats voting with the majority Republicans. The bill is not expected to be considered in the Senate. The House schedule for next week has not yet been announced.

The Senate did not meet today. When the chamber reconvenes on Monday, November 18, it is scheduled to complete work on compounding pharmacy legislation (H.R. 3204) before turning to the Defense authorization bill (S. 1197).

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

BUDGET CONFERENCE COMMITTEE OFFERS LITTLE NEWS   NEW

Members of the House-Senate conference committee on the FY14 budget appear to have made little progress toward reaching agreement on a budget for FY14. News reports indicate that Democrats continue to insist that closing tax loopholes should be part of the means of offsetting the cost of eliminating or reducing the sequester, while Republicans want the offsets to consist entirely of alternative spending cuts. The conference committee has a target deadline of December 13 to come up with an agreement; the current FY14 continuing resolution expires on January 15. AAU and other higher education associations have written letters to the conferees urging them to reach an agreement that eliminates or reduces sequestration and begins the job of closing the innovation deficit.
The Business-Higher Education Forum (BHEF), a group of Fortune 500 chief executive officers and university presidents, sent a letter to congressional budget negotiators on November 13 urging them to reach an FY14 budget agreement that “eliminates or substantially reduces sequestration, promotes economic growth through research and education investments, and includes modest entitlement reforms to help address the nation’s fiscal challenges and promote generational equity without harming those most in need.”

UNIVERSITY LEADERS RELEASE RESULTS OF AAU-APLU-TSC SURVEY ON SEQUESTER IMPACTS

Three AAU university leaders participated in a press conference on November 11 to release the results of the joint survey of the effects of the sequester on research universities conducted by AAU, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), and The Science Coalition. UCLA Chancellor Gene Block, University of Colorado-Boulder Chancellor Philip DiStefano, and Stony Brook University President Samuel Stanley joined APLU President Peter McPherson and Washington State University President Elson Floyd to discuss the lost research projects and reduced number of graduate students forced by the sequester. Several publications covered the press conference, which was held in conjunction with the APLU annual meeting. A Washington Post story can be viewed here.

CBO ISSUES ANNUAL REPORT ON REDUCING THE DEFICIT

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) on November 13 issued a report on options for reducing the federal budget deficit, including both tax and spending policies. The 103 options listed in the report deal with such areas of interest to research universities as Pell Grants, student loans, space exploration, the national endowments for the humanities and the arts, and mandatory health programs that affect hospitals.

The revenue section includes such options as curtailing the deduction for charitable giving, limiting the value of itemized deductions, and eliminating certain tax preferences for education expenses.

REPORT SHOWS HARMFUL EFFECTS OF SEQUESTER ON DOMESTIC DISCRETIONARY PROGRAMS

The advocacy coalition NDD United on November 12 released a report that describes the harmful effects of the sequester on programs within the non-defense discretionary (NDD) portion of the federal budget. “Faces of Austerity: How Budget Cuts Have Made Us Sicker, Poorer, and Less Secure” shows the broad effects around the nation of cuts in such areas as research, education, public safety, housing, job training, public health, social services, and natural resource management.

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