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CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE  NEW

The Senate is not in session today; the House convened in pro forma session, with no votes.

The House will reconvene next Tuesday, April 29. CQToday reports that the chamber is expected to approve legislation to bar genetic discrimination by employers and insurance companies (H.R. 493), which the Senate approved on April 24. Also next week, the chamber may consider a bill tightening standards for industrial dusts that cause explosions (H.R. 5522), a farm bill (H.R. 2419) if House and Senate conferees reach agreement, and another short-term extension of the Higher Education Act (see item below).

The Senate will reconvene on Monday, April 28, and is expected to begin consideration of a reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration (H.R. 2881), which could take most of the week. A bill to reauthorize the National Flood Insurance Program (S. 2284) might also be considered next week.

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

DEMOCRATIC LEADERS CONTINUE NEGOTIATIONS ON FY08 SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING BILL  NEW

House Democratic leaders continue efforts to put together an FY08 supplemental appropriations package to fund the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which will include the President’s FY08 request of $102 billion, along with a $70-billion “bridge fund” for the wars in FY09. Congress Daily reports this afternoon that leaders are now “looking to add $3 billion to $4 billion in domestic spending…beyond economic stimulus and troop-related funds.” This would be in addition to about $12 billion that is likely to be added to extend unemployment benefits and
increase funding for GI education. It is not clear if the extra funding for scientific research and education that groups of Senators and Representatives, associations, corporations, and universities have requested.

CongressDaily also reports that House leaders are likely to take the FY08 funding bill directly to the House floor, bypassing markup in the House Appropriations Committee “to speed consideration of the bill and prevent it from being loaded with amendments.” House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD) has said the goal is to pass the bill in time for the Senate to act and President Bush to sign the bill before the Memorial Day recess. But Republicans on the House Appropriations Committee strongly oppose bypassing the committee and suggest they might disrupt floor action on the bill by offering motions to adjourn and other procedural motions.

CQToday indicates that the Senate has taken a “wait-and-see approach” to the supplemental bill, deferring action until the House moves its legislation. It reports that Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) met with House Appropriations Committee Chairman David Obey (D-WI) on Thursday to discuss strategy for the supplemental.

**OTHER CONGRESSIONAL DEVELOPMENTS**

**NEW HEA EXTENSION NEEDED WHILE CONFERENCE NEGOTIATIONS CONTINUE**

CQToday reports this morning that Congress will need to pass another short-term extension of the Higher Education Act (HEA) while House and Senate negotiators continue to hash out a final reauthorization package. The current one-month extension expires next Wednesday, April 30.

A major sticking point, says the publication, is House negotiators’ continuing insistence on a provision that would penalize states if they cut back their higher education spending. State government officials oppose this requirement because it would prevent them from including higher education when budget cuts are necessary for balancing their budgets. They also warn that the provision would reduce their willingness to add funds to higher education in good times, when they might otherwise provide extra funding.

CQ notes that the underlying law (PL 105-244) has not been fully rewritten in 10 years, although pieces of it have been revised since then.

**HOUSE APPROVES SMALL BUSINESS BILL WITH NO INCREASE IN RESEARCH SET-ASIDE**

The House on April 23 approved a small business bill (H.R. 5819) without the increase in the set-aside for small business research at major federal research agencies that had raised strong opposition from several sources, including the White House, House Appropriations Committee Chairman David Obey (D-WI), and university organizations such as AAU.

The Small Business Innovation Research/Small Business Technology Transfer Program Reauthorization Act (SBIR/STTR) was approved by the House on a vote of 368 to 43, after the chamber adopted by voice vote an amendment offered by Rep. Vernon Ehlers (D-MI) to keep the small business set-asides at their current levels. The Ehlers amendment was approved after House Small Business Committee Chair Nydia Velquez (D-NY) said she would accept it.
As proposed, H.R. 5819 would have increased the small business research set-aside for the SBIR program from the current 2.5 percent to 3 percent, and the set-aside for STTR from 0.3 percent to 0.6 percent for federal research agencies with more than $100 million in annual extramural research funding. The 11 affected agencies include the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, and Energy, as well as the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Science Foundation. The White House Office of Management and Budget estimated that the increased set-asides would divert $650 million from those agencies’ peer-reviewed basic and applied research programs that fund university research.

AAU sent a letter to House leaders on April 17 opposing the set-aside increase. Rep. Obey sent a memorandum to his colleagues on the House Appropriations Committee that focused on the impact of the set-aside increase on NIH: raising the set-aside from the current $654 million to $841 million. In his floor statement, Mr. Obey said, “…the success rate for small business grants under this bill is expected to rise to 52 percent whereas the success rate for applications for traditional NIH grants is expected to decline to 18 percent [in FY09]. That is a disparity that the scientific community and the country at large simply cannot afford.”

**HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEES REVIEW NATIONAL SECURITY AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE**

Two House subcommittees held a hearing on April 24 to examine how social and behavioral sciences research can improve national security by helping support human, social, and cultural understanding and modeling for military applications. Included in the discussion was how the National Science Foundation and the Defense Department might better collaborate on such research.

The hearing comes at a time when the American Anthropological Association has criticized the military’s use of anthropologists in Iraq under the Human Terrain System, and Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates has announced plans for a new Defense research program, the Minerva Initiative, in which university consortia would conduct peer-reviewed, open, unclassified social and behavioral research on topics of interest to the Department.

Thursday’s hearing, called by the Terrorism Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee and the Research and Science Education Subcommittee of the Science and Technology Committee, featured officials from the National Science Foundation and the Defense Department, as well as a university researcher and a military officer who had just returned from Iraq. The focus was on the Human Terrain System, but the Minerva Initiative was mentioned in the hearing charter. Secretary Gates announced the Minerva Initiative on April 14 at the meeting of the AAU presidents and chancellors.

The hearing charter, Rep. Brian Baird’s (D-WA) opening statement, and the written statements of the four witnesses are available on the House Science and Technology Committee Web site.

**OTHER**

**WASHINGTON THINK TANKS ISSUE REPORT CALLING FOR NEW FEDERAL INNOVATION ORGANIZATION**
Two Washington, D.C.-based think tanks have issued a report that urges the federal government to create a National Innovation Foundation (NIF) to advance national innovation and innovation policy. The new foundation, which could be an independent agency like the National Science Foundation or a “government-related public corporation within the National Institute of Standards and Technology,” would consolidate innovation policy efforts scattered throughout the government and bridge the gap between basic research and the introduction of new products and processes. The agency would use a variety of competitive grant programs to promote industry-university research consortia, regional industry clusters, and other collaborations at the national, state, and regional levels.

The report, “Boosting Productivity, Innovation, and Growth through a National Innovation Foundation,” was released publicly on April 22 by the Metropolitan Policy Program within the Brookings Institute and the Information Technology & Innovation Foundation, with the endorsement of the Council on Competitiveness.


AAU has no position on the recommendations in the report.

**MAY 6 BRIEFING WITH DOD DEPUTY UNDERSECRETARY**  
*NEW*

The Coalition for National Security Research has scheduled a May 6 briefing with Deputy Under Secretary of Defense William Rees. The session will take place on Tuesday, May 6, at 2:00 p.m. ET at the American Chemical Society at 1155 16th Street, NW, in conference room EF.

The topics to be covered during the briefing are FY09 funding for basic (6.1) defense research; future trends and focus of Defense research; the Minerva Initiative for unclassified, peer-reviewed research in the social and behavioral sciences; and export control policy.

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