The House and Senate met today but held no recorded votes.

The House will reconvene on Tuesday, April 22, when it will consider bills under suspension of the rules. On Wednesday and Thursday, the House will consider H.R. 5789, the Science and Technology Innovation Act of 2008 (see below), and H.R. 2830, the Coast Guard reauthorization bill. No votes are planned for Friday.

The Senate will reconvene on Monday, April 21, but will hold no votes until Tuesday, when senators will vote on a cloture petition on legislation to overturn last year’s Supreme Court decision making it more difficult for plaintiffs to win pay discrimination cases under civil rights law. The Senate, according to CongressDaily, also is likely to take up the Disabled Veterans Insurance Improvement Act (S. 1315) and may consider reauthorization legislation for the Federal Aviation Administration and a measure that would bar employment discrimination on the basis of genetic testing.

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

HOUSE AND SENATE LEADERS CONTINUE SHAPING FY08 SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS BILLS  NEW
Democratic leaders in the House and Senate continue work on their respective versions of the FY08 supplemental appropriations bill. Leaders in both houses say they will add funding for domestic programs to their bills, despite the White House’s threat to veto any supplemental bill that funds anything other than the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

CQToday reported yesterday that House leaders expect to include funding for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan for both FY08 and FY09 as a means of gaining leverage to include additional spending, but there apparently is no word on how much domestic spending might be added to the measure. AAU and many other organizations have urged lawmakers to provide additional funding for scientific research and education in the package to repair damage caused by the failure to approve promised increases during the FY08 appropriations process last year. The bill is tentatively scheduled for mark-up in the House Appropriations Committee next week, and House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD) said House leaders plan to take the bill to the House floor during the first week of May. Recent reports suggest that the leadership may skip a committee mark-up and take the bill directly to the floor.

In the Senate, CQToday reports that the Senate Appropriations Committee is considering adding $24 billion in domestic spending. The only possible additions mentioned by the publication were $490 million for local law enforcement grants, $10 billion for infrastructure projects such as roads and bridges, $500 million for a world food program, and $350 million for wildfire suppression programs.

**BIPARTISAN HOUSE GROUP CALLS FOR SCIENCE FUNDING IN FY08 SUPPLEMENTAL**

A bipartisan group of 31 House members wrote to House leaders on April 17 to urge inclusion in the FY08 supplemental appropriations bill of funds for federal research and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education. They wrote, in part, “We empathize with the desire of many of our colleagues and the Administration to keep the supplemental bill focused on spending for the military. However, should the House choose to include additional funding, the Department of Energy and National Science Foundation sorely need an infusion of funds in FY2008…[W]e would not be making this request if we did not believe the situation at our nation’s laboratories and research universities and the need to improve STEM education warranted immediate and supplemental resources.”

The letter can be found on the AAU Web site.

**ORGANIZATIONS URGE SUPPLEMENTAL FY08 FUNDING FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND EDUCATION**

More than 240 leading business, education, and scientific organizations signed on to letters sent to the President and congressional leaders on April 16 urging them to add funding to the FY08 supplemental appropriations bill for scientific research and science and mathematics education. The supplemental funding bill is tentatively scheduled for markup in the House Appropriations Committee next week.

The letters were spearheaded by Tapping America’s Potential (TAP), a coalition of 16 business organizations, and the Task Force on the Future of American Innovation, a coalition of business,
scientific, and education organizations, including AAU. This and related efforts were sparked by the failure of Congress and the President last year to provide significant funding increases for key research and education programs at the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy Office of Science, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology, despite strong bipartisan support to do so.

A press release about the letters, including links to the letters and the list of signatories, is available on the AAU Web site.

HOLLIDAY-SPANIER OP-ED URGES FOCUS ON PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN TO INCREASE SUPPORT FOR FEDERAL INVESTMENT IN SCIENCE

Congress and the Administration failed to “walk the walk” last year in support of U.S. competitiveness in the global economy, according to an op-ed by the chairs of AAU and the Council on Competitiveness (COC) that appeared in the Philadelphia Inquirer April 11. The authors, Graham Spanier, president of the Pennsylvania State University and chair of AAU, and Chad Holliday, CEO of DuPont and chair of the Council on Competitiveness, argue that supporters of science should focus on the presidential campaign as a vehicle for gaining needed political support for science and research.

Despite strong support from the Administration and strong bipartisan support in Congress for a significant increase in federal funding for science research and education programs, the final FY08 omnibus appropriations bill fell short. “When political push came to budgetary shove,” says the article, “all these words of support turned out to be hollow” and the final spending bill “left science out in the cold.”

The piece highlights efforts to encourage the presidential candidates to discuss their positions on science and technology issues, including the “Science and Technology in the 2008 Presidential Elections” Web site, which is sponsored by AAU, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the Richard Lounsbery Foundation.

OTHER CONGRESSIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

HOUSE APPROVES BILL TO SHORE UP FEDERAL STUDENT LOANS

The House on April 17 approved, by a vote of 383 to 27, legislation aimed at ensuring that students and families have access to student loans despite the turmoil in national credit markets. The Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act of 2008 (H.R. 5715) would increase borrowing limits for federal graduate and undergraduate loans and allow the Department of Education to buy student loans from private lenders, freeing up capital for them to make additional loans.

The House approved an amendment by Reps. Mike Castle (R-DE) and Peter Welch (D-VT) that requires the Government Accountability Office to conduct a study on the impact of raising borrowing limits on tuition, fees, and room and board, as well as on private loan borrowing.

The measure is similar to a bill (S. 2815) introduced in the Senate on April 3 by Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee Chairman Edward Kennedy (D-MA). CongressDaily reports that Senator Kennedy hopes to have the Senate consider the bill soon.
The House bill would increase annual loan limits for dependent and independent undergraduates by $2,000. For dependent students, the limits would be increased to $5,500 for first-year students, $6,500 for second year students, and $7,500 annually for the final two years. Additionally, the bill would increase the aggregate borrowing limits (for both subsidized and unsubsidized loans) from $23,000 to $31,000 for dependent undergraduates and from $46,000 to $57,500 for independent undergraduates. For graduate students, H.R. 5715 would increase the annual borrowing limit for unsubsidized loans from $12,000 to $14,000.

The bill also would make other changes to federal student loan programs. For example, it would give parent borrowers participating in the PLUS program the option to defer repayment up to six months after their children leave college. Additionally, the bill would authorize the Secretary of Education to buy student loans from lenders, freeing up funds for lenders to use in making new loans. The manager’s amendment offered by House Education and Labor Committee Chairman George Miller (D-CA) requires the Department to involve officials from the Treasury Department and the Office of Management and Budget in the decision-making process, to ensure that the federal government incurs no costs in the loan purchases.

A fact sheet about the bill is available on the House Education and Labor Committee Web site.

AAU OPPOSES INCREASING SMALL BUSINESS RESEARCH SET-ASIDE  UPDATE

AAU sent a letter to the House leadership and the Science, Energy and Commerce, and Small Business Committees on April 17 expressing opposition to a provision in the Science and Technology Innovation Act of 2008 (H.R. 5789) that would increase the small business set-aside at certain federal research agencies from 2.5 percent to 3 percent. The measure is scheduled to be considered by the House next week.

The AAU letter notes that the association supports many of the policy recommendations in the bill, such as giving research agencies greater flexibility in making cross-agency awards. But it questions whether there is enough small business research of sufficient merit to justify an increase that would come at the expense of peer-reviewed basic and applied research. The letter also points out that if research budgets remain flat, the increase would “translate directly into cuts, in both nominal and real terms, in the budgets of most federal research agencies.” It adds, “We join federal agencies, including the Small Business Administration and the National Institutes of Health (NIH), that also oppose an increased set-aside.”

An analysis by the Office of Management and Budget of the impact of the set-aside increase on federal research spending can be found here.

KENNEDY-MILLER BILL WOULD GIVE GRADUATE STUDENTS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING RIGHTS  NEW

Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Rep. George Miller (D-CA) introduced legislation on April 17 that would give graduate students at private colleges and universities the right to bargain collectively.

The Teaching and Research Assistant Collective Bargaining Rights Act (S. 2891, H.R. 5838) would effectively overturn the 2004 decision by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) in
the Brown University case, which held that graduate students are students and not employees of their universities. The NLRB in essence determined that the relationship between schools and graduate student assistants who perform services in connection with their degree programs is predominantly academic rather than economic.

The bill would change the definition of "employee" to include graduate students who receive funding as teaching and research assistants. If this change were enacted, graduate students would be considered employees, with the right to organize and bargain collectively under the National Labor Relations Act.

SENATE MEASURE WOULD EXTEND TAX PROVISIONS AFFECTING UNIVERSITIES

Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-MT) and Ranking Member Chuck Grassley (R-IA) introduced a bipartisan bill (S. 2886) on April 17 that contains numerous extensions of existing and expired tax breaks. Included in the bill are three provisions of particular interest to research universities. They would extend the qualified tuition deduction, the IRA charitable rollover, and the research and development tax credit.

The "extenders" bill contains many other provisions, including a "patch" for the alternative minimum tax. Based on previous estimates of the provisions included in the bill, the measure will carry a price tag of approximately $100 billion. However, it does not include offsets. House Democrats continue to press for pay-as-you-go budgeting rules, which would require revenue increases or spending cuts to offset the cost of the legislation.

Under the measure, the qualified tuition deduction, the IRA charitable rollover, and research and development tax credit, all of which expired on December 31, 2007, would be reinstated retroactively for 2008. The bill would extend the provisions until the end of 2009.

Chairman Baucus reportedly wants the Finance Committee to consider the bill in May, but a mark-up has not yet been scheduled.

The Committee's press release can be found [here](#).

OTHER

AAAS S&T POLICY FORUM SCHEDULED FOR MAY 8-9

This year’s S&T Policy Forum will be hosted by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) on May 8-9, 2008, in Washington, D.C. The meeting will include discussions of research and development funding in the FY09 budget and new models for funding science and for science advocacy. Among the featured speakers will be White House Science Advisor John Marburger, Harvard University Professor Emeritus Lewis Branscomb, and John Kao, author of “Innovation Nation: How America is Losing Its Innovation Edge, Why It Matters, and How We Can Get It Back.”

Information about the meeting agenda and how to register is available at [www.aaas.org/forum](http://www.aaas.org/forum).
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