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CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE  NEW

The House was not in session today. The Senate met today to continue consideration of a major housing package (H.R. 3221) and an energy speculation bill (S. 3268). The Senate was unable to reach the 60 votes necessary to invoke cloture on the energy speculation bill but voted by the overwhelming margin of 80-13 to invoke cloture on the housing bill. That action sets up a final vote on the housing bill for tomorrow morning, Saturday. Also during tomorrow’s unusual Saturday session, the Senate is expected to hold a cloture vote on legislation to increase funding for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (S. 3186).

Next week, in the run-up to the month-long August recess, the Senate may take up legislation (S. 3297) that Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK) has blocked because it combines a number of bills that would authorize creation of new federal programs. CongressDaily reports that Senator Coburn has no intention of letting the package pass quickly, so much of next week could be taken up by that debate. If there is time next week, Majority Leader Reid hopes also to consider tax extender legislation, a conference report on the Consumer Product Safety Commission (H.R. 4040), and possibly the FY09 Defense authorization bill.

The House next week is scheduled to consider the FY09 Military Construction-Veterans Affairs appropriations bill, along with legislation to address equal pay for women (H.R. 1338).

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD) told CongressDaily that Democratic leaders hope to bring up several must-pass bills after the August recess, including tax extender legislation and a fix for the alternative minimum tax. Rep. Hoyer said the bills he expected to see considered in October included children’s health insurance legislation, the FY09 Defense appropriations bill, and an FY09 continuing resolution (CR) that would fund federal agencies and programs into early next year.
The House and Senate could also act next week on a conference report on the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (see article below).

**BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS**

**HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE TO MOVE FY09 DEFENSE BILL NEXT WEDNESDAY  NEW**

After a month of delay, the House Appropriations Committee is preparing to move forward on legislation, specifically the FY09 Defense appropriations bill. The bill will be marked up in subcommittee on Wednesday, July 30. Full committee markup will be held the first week of September, with floor action the following week.

Late last month, Committee Chairman David Obey (D-WI) suspended committee consideration of the FY09 appropriations bills after committee Republicans tried to offer amendments on oil and gas development during markup of the FY09 Labor-HHS-Education bill. Rep. Obey said he would not resume consideration of the remaining seven FY09 funding bills until Republicans agreed to “regular order.”

That regular order apparently was restored—at least for the Defense bill—after a meeting earlier this week of the top appropriators of both parties. CQToday reports that the group agreed to move the Defense funding bill through the regular process, but on an accelerated schedule. “Everybody is on board to pass the bill once we get back in September,” said Defense Ranking Member C.W. Bill Young (R-FL).

Also on July 30, the House is scheduled to take up the FY09 Military Construction-Veterans Affairs appropriations bill. The measure, which would be the first FY09 funding bill considered on the House floor, is expected to pass with little problem.

None of the remaining 10 FY09 appropriations measures is expected to be approved separately by the House this fall. Instead, they are likely to be bundled into a continuing resolution that would fund programs at current levels through early next year.

**SENATE COMMITTEE POSTPONES SECOND FY08 SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS BILL  NEW**

The Senate Appropriations Committee has postponed, until September, consideration of a second FY08 supplemental appropriations bill. Committee Chairman Robert Byrd (D-WV) cancelled a scheduled July 24 markup of the bill. He also cancelled markup of two of the committee’s remaining three FY09 funding bills, Interior and Legislative Branch.

In a written statement released July 22 by the Committee (text below), Senator Byrd said that consideration of the FY08 supplemental was postponed to September because there would be no Senate floor time to consider the bill before then. The statement indicated that consideration of the FY09 funding bills was being postponed for the same reason that House Appropriations Committee Chairman David Obey (D-WI) had postponed markups in his committee: Republican efforts to force votes on amendments to open new offshore areas for oil and gas drilling.
Chairman Byrd’s statement did not specify when the two FY09 bills might be considered in committee, but September seems likely because markup of the panel’s last remaining FY09 bill—Defense—will be held over until then.

Chairman Byrd’s full statement reads as follows:

"Given the uncertainty in how the oil and gas drilling issue is currently playing out on the Senate floor, I have decided to postpone the July 24th appropriations markups at this time.

In addition, with the Senate floor schedule between now and the August recess consumed with debate on legislation relating to housing, energy, defense authorization and tax extenders, there is no opportunity to begin consideration of a supplemental appropriations bill during the next 10 days.

It is my understanding that the Senate Democratic Leadership is committed to bringing up the second emergency supplemental appropriations bill in the Senate in September that will provide critical infrastructure funding and respond to national disasters, such as the California wildfires, the Midwest floods, and Hurricane Katrina."

UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY TO URGE INCLUSION OF NIH FUNDING IN FY08 SUPPLEMENTAL UPDATED

Although it is not clear how Democratic leaders will deal with the second FY08 supplemental funding bill in September, the research university community will urge members of the House and Senate over the August recess to include $500 million for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in a final package.

The NIH funding was included in a manager’s amendment to the FY08 supplemental funding bill that was to be considered in the Senate Appropriations Committee on July 24, before Chairman Byrd postponed the markup. Senators Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Arlen Specter (R-PA) have led this effort. Congress added $150 million for NIH in the first FY08 supplemental funding package (P.L. 110-252), which was signed into law on June 30.

OTHER CONGRESSIONAL ISSUES

ACTION LIKELY NEXT WEEK ON HEA REAUTHORIZATION NEW

Based on contacts with House and Senate staff and media reports, congressional staff members have concluded pre-conference negotiations on legislation (H.R. 4137, S. 1642) to reauthorize the Higher Education Act (HEA). Staff are said to be putting the final touches on the bill and making technical corrections. The official conference committee could convene as early as next Tuesday, July 29, at which time conferees are expected to approve the bill. It is unclear if conferees will consider any modifications to the staff-approved measure.

Although House and Senate floor consideration of the HEA conference agreement has not been officially scheduled, a statement about next week’s House floor schedule from the office of House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD) says the House could consider, "any conference
report available, possibly including: the Higher Education Conference Report." At this writing there has been no similar statement from the Senate.

ASSOCIATIONS URGE SUPPORT OF SIMON STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM IN OMNIBUS LEGISLATION NEW

The six presidentially based higher education associations, including AAU, have written to Senate leaders to thank them for including in an omnibus legislative package (S. 3297) the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Foundation Act of 2007 (H.R. 1469/S. 991). The Simon bill is designed to help provide students in all sectors of higher education with the opportunity to study abroad, particularly in non-traditional destinations. The goal is to send one million students abroad over the next 10 years. The study abroad measure was approved last year in the House by voice vote and was reported favorably this year from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

As with the other bills that have been bundled into S. 3297, Senate floor consideration of the study abroad bill has been blocked by Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK) because the measure would authorize creation of a new federal program.

OTHER

AAU SEEKS CANDIDATES FOR SENIOR POLICY ANALYST POSITION

AAU is seeking candidates for the new position of Senior Policy Analyst. The individual will be responsible for designing and conducting research, policy studies, and surveys in support of AAU’s national and institutional policy development and legislative advocacy.

An advanced degree and demonstrated experience involving research and policy analysis are required.

Members of the CFR and others are encouraged to distribute the position description as appropriate to potential candidates.

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