The House was in session earlier today. When the chamber reconvenes on Monday, January 22, it will consider several measures under suspension, including legislation to revoke the pension of a lawmaker convicted of crimes related to his or her official duties. The House will not be in session on Thursday and Friday to accommodate House Republican’s retreat.

Earlier this week, the House completed work on the six bills that comprised House Democrats’ “first hundred hours” legislative agenda. The bills included legislation to allow the use in research of human embryos left over from in vitro fertilization (H.R. 3), which was approved January 11, and a reduction in interest rates on new Stafford loans for undergraduates (see item below), which was approved January 17.

The Senate was out of session today and will reconvene on Monday, January 22, to begin work on a bill that combines the House plan to raise the federal minimum wage with certain small business tax breaks (S. 3). The chamber is also likely to consider a non-binding resolution regarding the President’s plan to add U.S. troops in Iraq.

This week, the Senate approved its overhaul of ethics and lobbying rules (see item below).

The House and Senate will hold a joint session Tuesday evening, January 23, for the President’s State of the Union address.
BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

APPROPRIATORS HOPE TO AGREE ON FY07 CR BY END OF NEXT WEEK

CongressDaily reports that House and Senate appropriators hope to reach general agreement on the year-long FY07 continuing resolution (CR) by the end of next week. House leaders might take the measure to the House floor as early as the week of January 29. Senate Democratic leaders may hold Senate floor action until closer to the February 15 expiration of the current CR as a means of preventing extended debate and amendments.

Although early reports indicated that appropriators might be able to find as much as $6 billion in earmarked funds to offset potential increases for priority programs, CongressDaily reports that appropriations staff are having difficulty defining earmarks in certain cases and determining which earmarks can be redirected to other programs across the government. Also possible for redirection are dollars from programs funded in FY07 at higher levels than the President’s request—such as Export-Import Bank subsidies—and funds rescinded from previous appropriations. However, it may be that just $3 billion is available for redirection, a sum which equals what many agree is the increase needed for veterans health care alone.

EIGHTY-FOUR HOUSE MEMBERS URGE ADDED FY07 FUNDING FOR NSF; LIEBERMAN INITIATES SIMILAR EFFORT IN THE SENATE

Eighty-four Members of the House joined in sending a letter to House appropriators January 17 urging them to provide $6.1 billion for the National Science Foundation (NSF) in FY07 as part of the year-long continuing resolution. The letter, spearheaded by Reps. Bart Gordon (D-TN), Vern Ehlers (R-MI), and Rush Holt (D-NJ), urges appropriators to provide NSF with the amount of funding requested by the President and approved by the House last year as part of the FY07 Science-State-Justice-Commerce appropriations bill.

A copy of the letter is available on the AAU Web site at: http://www.aau.edu/budget/House_FY07_NSF_1-17-07.pdf. The letter is posted in a new section on the AAU FY07 Budget & Appropriations Web page dealing with the FY07 continuing resolution.

Senator Joe Lieberman (I-CT) is spearheading a similar letter in the Senate, which he hopes to send to appropriators early next week. The letter urges Senate appropriators to provide $5.99 billion for NSF in the FY07 CR, the same level approved by the Senate Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Subcommittee. The deadline for Senators to sign on to the letter is Monday, January 22. Additional information is available from Colleen Shogan of the Senator’s staff at 202-224-4725.

SIXTY-FOUR HOUSE MEMBERS REQUEST INCREASED FUNDING FOR DOE OFFICE OF SCIENCE

Sixty-four Members of the House have sent a letter to House appropriators asking them to provide $4.1 billion for the Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Science in the FY07 continuing resolution. The letter, circulated by Reps. Judy Biggert (R-IL), Ellen Tauscher (D-
CA), and Rush Holt (D-NJ) notes that this is the level requested by the President in FY07 and approved by both the full House and the Senate Appropriations Committee.

A copy of the letter is available on the AAU Web site at: http://www.aau.edu/budget/FY07_DOE_OS.pdf.

**OTHER CONGRESSIONAL DEVELOPMENTS**

**SENATE APPROVES ETHICS AND LOBBYING BILL**

Following intense negotiations over Republican amendments, the Senate on January 18 approved a comprehensive overhaul of ethics, lobbying, and earmark regulations (S. 1). *CQToday* reports that among other provisions, the bill would ban Senators and their staff from accepting meals, gifts and trips from lobbyists; allow a point of order on the Senate floor against bills in which the sponsors of congressional earmarks are not identified; and establish a database of lobbyists’ contacts and activities.

*CQToday* adds that a House-Senate conference on the legislation is unlikely to convene any time soon. The House changed its rules on lobbying, earmarking, and ethics by adopting a resolution that applies only to that chamber ((H. Res. 6).

**HOUSE APPROVES BILL TO REDUCE STUDENT LOAN INTEREST RATES**

The House on January 17 approved by a vote of 356 to 71 legislation (H.R. 5) to cut interest rates on new Stafford loans for undergraduates by half over five years. The measure would cut interest rates on new loans from the current 6.8 percent to 3.4 percent by 2011. The 3.4 percent rate would expire after 2011 if an extension is not enacted.

The estimated $6 billion cost of the bill would be covered by reducing certain lender subsidies. The White House has issued a Statement of Administration Policy against the bill on the basis that added funding would be better spent by increasing Pell grants. The statement further argues that the bill could encourage more student borrowing, which “can also fuel today’s upward tuition spiral.” The statement, which falls short of a veto threat, is available on the White House Web site at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/legislative/sap/110-1/hr5sap-r.pdf.

Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee Chairman Ted Kennedy (D-MA) has indicated that he plans to include an interest rate reduction proposal in a broader higher education bill. He is likely to introduce the legislation next month.

**SUBCOMMITTEES NAMED FOR HOUSE EDUCATION AND LABOR COMMITTEE**

House Education and Labor Committee Chairman George Miller (D-CA) on January 18 announced the names of the panel’s subcommittees for the 110th Congress, as well as their chairs and Democratic members. Ranking Member Buck McKeon (R-CA) announced the ranking members of each subcommittee, but will wait to announce Republican members of each sub panel until next week. The subcommittees and their leadership are as follows:
EXECUTIVE BRANCH

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO HOLD NEGOTIATED RULEMAKING SESSION ON ACCREDITATION  NEW

Although the Department of Education has not yet published a formal notice in the Federal Register, Inside Higher Ed reports that department officials plan to move ahead with a negotiated rulemaking session on higher education accreditation. Such sessions are designed to explore possible changes in federal rules governing higher education. A draft of the department’s plan indicates that the first session will be held February 21-23 in Arlington, Virginia and that topics for discussion will include measures of student achievement and transfer of credit.

The draft plan also indicates that negotiators from the higher education community will include John Wiley, chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Madison; Steve Crow, of the North Central Association's Higher Learning Commission; Craig Swenson of Western Governors University; Tom Corts of the Alabama College System; and Judith Eaton of the Council on Higher Education Accreditation.

OTHER

STUDENT AID ALLIANCE DETAILS FY08 PRIORITIES  NEW
The Student Aid Alliance, a coalition of higher education organizations, has issued its FY08 funding request for federal student aid programs. Among its several recommendations, the document urges increasing the Pell Grant maximum to $5,100. It also calls for raising the budget of the Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN) program from the current $30.1 million to $50 million and for raising support for Javits graduate fellowships from the current $9.7 million to $17 million.


**NATIONAL CAMPAIGN AIMS TO HELP STUDENTS PREPARE FOR COLLEGE**

The American Council on Education (ACE), in cooperation with Lumina Foundation and the Ad Council, has launched a national public service campaign aimed at helping middle- and high school students better prepare for college. The initiative, KnowHow2GO, combines national media coverage with specific advice for students, particularly those from low-income families, on how to prepare for college and what it takes to get there. Research has shown that 90 percent of young people in the U.S. expect to attend college, but that many do not understand how to turn their expectations into reality.

The initiative focuses on four steps students should take to prepare for college: finding an adult to help them navigate the process, learning what high school courses they need to prepare themselves for college, exploring which colleges might fit their own needs and interests, and finding the financial aid they need to attend.

More information about the KnowHow 2GO campaign, including how campuses can participate in the initiative, is available at: [http://www.knowhow2go.org/media/WelcomeandKeyMessages.pdf](http://www.knowhow2go.org/media/WelcomeandKeyMessages.pdf).

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