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CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE  NEW

The House was out of session today and yesterday to accommodate the House GOP’s retreat. The chamber will reconvene on Monday, January 29 and will take up the year-long FY07 continuing resolution (see item below).

The Senate also is out of session today and will return on Monday. The chamber will resume consideration of the House bill to raise the federal minimum wage (H.R. 2), to which the Senate has added a package of business tax breaks (see item below).

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

HOUSE LEADERS PLAN TO MOVE FY07 CR NEXT WEEK  NEW

House Democratic leaders plan to begin floor consideration of the year-long FY07 continuing resolution (CR) next Wednesday, January 31, with Senate action expected the following week. CQToday reports that House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD) has said that if Democratic leaders in both chambers can agree on the package, it likely will not be open to amendment on the House floor. However, notes the publication, Senate leaders would not be able to block floor amendments and “without a carefully negotiated bipartisan deal, the Senate could get hung up for days or even weeks on an appropriations package.” The goal is to complete the measure
before the current CR expires on February 15, without the need for a short-term extension.

News reports indicate that the year-long CR is expected to provide additional funding above the FY06 freeze level for veterans’ affairs and military construction, as well as for programs funded in the Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill. Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), chairman of the Senate Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee, told CQToday on January 24 that his panel’s allocation should be on track with the FY07 funding level approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee last year (which was $2.3 billion above the FY06 level). Senator Harkin said extra funding would be used for such programs as Pell grants and the National Institutes of Health.

There also are signs that the CR might provide some funding increases for the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Science. The President’s FY07 budget request and the House-passed FY07 appropriations bills included $6 billion for NSF, or $439 million above FY06, and $4.1 billion for the Office of Science, or $505 million above FY06. (See next item.)

UNIVERSITY AND INDUSTRY LEADERS URGE ADDED FY07 FUNDING FOR NSF, DOE, AND NIST  UPDATED

University and industry leaders have joined together in several efforts to encourage congressional appropriators to bolster funding for the National Science Foundation (NSF), the Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Science, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology in the year-long FY07 continuing resolution (CR). These actions have included both letters and direct contacts with Members of Congress and their staffs.

Among the letters sent and made available to AAU are two from the Task Force on the Future of American Innovation, in which AAU participates; one from the Semiconductor Industry Association; and several joint letters from AAU university presidents and business leaders. The latter group includes letters by Princeton University and Google; UCLA and Northrop-Grumman; Ohio research universities, Battelle, and Proctor & Gamble; Syracuse, Anaren, and Sensis; University of Oregon and Intel; the AAU universities in California; and the AAU universities in Michigan.

Letters that have been shared with AAU are available on the AAU Web site at: http://www.aau.edu/budget/fy2007CR.cfm.

Both CQToday and CongressDaily reported on the letters this morning. CongressDaily wrote:

“…Universities, companies such as Google and Intel, and numerous lawmakers on both sides of the aisle have petitioned for increases above last year for the National Science Foundation and Energy Department's Office of Science.

Both House and Senate Appropriations committees approved roughly the same increases for both agencies in their initial versions of the spending bills, totaling about $900 million. UCLA and Northrop Grumman Corp. recently joined forces to lobby House Speaker Pelosi for the extra money.”

FORTY HOUSE MEMBERS REQUEST ADDED FY07 FUNDING FOR NASA  NEW
A bipartisan group of House Members has asked House appropriators to provide NASA with at least the agency’s FY07 budget request as part of the year-long FY07 continuing resolution. The space agency requested $16.79 billion in FY07, or $169 million above the FY06 level.


**SENATE REJECTS KYL AMENDMENT TO TAX QUALIFIED TUITION REDUCTIONS**  
*NEW*

The Senate yesterday by a vote of 50-42 defeated an amendment offered by Senator Jon Kyl (R-AZ) that would have paid for the extension of certain business tax breaks by eliminating the IRS section 117(d) tax exclusion for qualified tuition reductions. The amendment was considered during Senate debate on the House-passed legislation to raise the federal minimum wage (H.R. 2), which is accompanied in the Senate by a bipartisan package of business tax breaks. The chamber currently is working through dozens of amendments to that package.

The AAU staff extends its sincerest thanks to those members of the CFR who asked their Senators to oppose the amendment. CFR members are encouraged to thank those Senators who voted against it. The vote is available on the Senate Web site at: http://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=110&session=1&vote=00032.

Qualified tuition reductions are not the same as the taxpayer deduction for college tuition. Rather, section 117(d) permits educational institutions to pay for the tuition expenses (not room and board) of employees and their families without either the institution or the employee having to pay federal employment and income taxes on the amount of the benefit. This exclusion applies to any education below the graduate level (including K-12), unless the recipient is a graduate student engaged in teaching or research. In the latter case, any payment for teaching or research must be included in gross income and wages.

Colleges and universities use this tuition benefit to attract and retain employees at all levels. It is particularly valuable in localities where there is strong competition from industry for employees.

**OTHER CONGRESSIONAL DEVELOPMENTS**

**HOUSE S&T COMMITTEE ANNOUNCES SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRS AND ROSTERS**

House Science and Technology Committee Chairman Bart Gordon (D-TN) on January 24 announced the committee’s membership, as well as the chairs and ranking members of the panel’s subcommittees. Three subcommittees have been renamed and a fifth has been added on investigations and oversight. The subcommittees and their leadership are as follows:

Subcommittee on Energy & Environment (formerly Energy)  
Chairman Nick Lampson (D-TX)  
Ranking Member Bob Inglis (R-SC)
EXECUTIVE BRANCH

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PUBLISHES SCHEDULE FOR NEGOTIATED RULEMAKING SESSIONS


OTHER

NATIONAL HUMANITIES ALLIANCE 2007 CONFERENCE AND ADVOCACY DAY SCHEDULED  NEW

The National Humanities Alliance, in which AAU participates, will hold its annual meeting and Humanities Advocacy Day on March 26-27, 2007, in Washington, D.C. The two-day event will include legislative briefings, advocacy training, a lunchtime address by Allen Weinstein, Archivist of the United States, and a Capitol Hill reception and exhibit of federally supported humanities projects.


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