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CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE  NEW

Both the House and Senate have adjourned for the week and will reconvene on Monday, April 23.

When the Senate reconvenes on Monday, it will resume consideration of the America COMPETES Act (S. 761), with a final vote expected on Tuesday (see item below). Also next week, both the House and Senate are expected to consider the conference report on the FY07 war supplemental funding bill (H.R. 1591), the House on Wednesday and the Senate on Thursday. The House also is expected to consider two science and math education bills (H.R. 362, H.R. 363) discussed below, and possibly small business legislation (H.R. 1332).

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

CONFEREES ON FY07 SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING BILL TO CONVENE ON MONDAY  NEW
CongressDaily reports that the House-Senate conference on the FY07 emergency war supplemental funding bill (H.R. 1591) is expected to begin on Monday, with the goal of approving a bill in the House on April 25 and in the Senate the following day. However, because President Bush has said he will veto the measure if it includes language regarding a timeline for U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, negotiations are also expected on a “post-veto package.” Also at issue between the White House and Congress is the $21 billion in domestic spending for Hurricane Katrina relief and other needs that has been added to the measure. House Appropriations Committee Chairman David Obey (D-WI) told the publication that he would not discuss details of a second package because that is “a leadership decision.” He added that he did not expect much of the additional spending to be dropped from the final bill.


WORK CONTINUES ON FY08 BUDGET CONFERENCE

CongressDaily reports that House and Senate negotiators held preliminary discussions this week on the FY08 budget resolution. The two sides have not settled on an overall discretionary spending level or on whether to assume extension of several tax breaks that expire in 2010. The House version of the budget resolution provides $6 billion more in discretionary spending than the Senate’s. Also under discussion is whether to include the House reconciliation instructions to reduce lender subsidies in the student loan program, intended in part to increase funding for other student aid programs, such as Pell Grants.

House Budget Committee Chairman John Spratt (D-SC) told CQToday that he had discussed the budget with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and expected that House conferees would be appointed formally next week. He said he is aiming for final adoption of the budget resolution by May 15.

OTHER CONGRESSIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

HEARINGS PLANNED NEXT WEEK ON CAMPUS SAFETY

In response to the killings at Virginia Tech this week, House and Senate committees have scheduled hearings next week on campus safety.

In the Senate, the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee has scheduled a hearing for Monday, April 23, at 2:30 p.m. in 342 Dirksen Building titled, “Protecting College Campuses: Best Practices.” Among those testifying will be American Council on Education President David Ward. Our colleagues at the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges report that the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee may also hold a hearing on this issue next week.

Two hearings are planned in the House. The Homeland Security Committee has scheduled a hearing on school safety for Tuesday, April 24, at 10:00 a.m. in 311 Cannon Building. The Education and Labor Committee will hold a hearing on Thursday, April 26, at 10:30 a.m. in 2175 Rayburn Building titled, “College Campus Safety.”
Both the House and Senate have begun moving authorization bills aimed at implementing economic competitiveness recommendations from the National Academies’ 2005 report, “Rising Above the Gathering Storm.” These include not only bills containing multi-agency funding levels and policy proposals but also reauthorizations of the National Science Foundation and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (see items below).

The Senate began consideration today of the “America COMPETES Act” (S. 761), which is a comprehensive competitiveness bill. Consideration will continue next Monday with a final vote expected on Tuesday. The bill contains new funding authorization levels for several research agencies, including the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Department of Energy Office of Science, and it would expand and create new programs aimed at improving K-12 math and science education as well as establish a President’s Council on Innovation and Competitiveness to develop a comprehensive agenda to promote innovation and competitiveness.


The House next week is expected to consider two bills on innovation that have been reported from the House Science and Technology Committee: the “10,000 Teachers, 10 Million Minds Science and Math Scholarship Act” (H.R. 362) and “The Sowing the Seeds Through Science and Engineering Research Act” (H.R. 363).

H.R. 362 aims to strengthen math and science education through such means as increasing scholarships for students majoring in science and engineering fields who are committed to teaching, and creating a teacher education program at NSF that would include an in-service training program for math and science teachers.

H.R. 363 would authorize NSF and the Department of Energy to make early-career awards to young scientists and engineers, create a presidential innovation award, create an office in the President’s Office of Science and Technology Policy to set priorities among research infrastructure needs, and recognize NASA’s contribution to national innovation.

The House Science & Technology Subcommittee on Research and Science Education approved a three-year reauthorization bill for the National Science Foundation (NSF) (H.R. 1867) on April 19. The measure would authorize funding levels over three years that would place the agency’s research budget on a track to double within 10 years, as the President has recommended, and seeks to encourage young investigators, improve K-16 math and science education, and encourage university-industry research partnerships.

The full committee is scheduled to consider H.R. 1867 on Monday, April 23.

The technology subcommittee of the House Science and Technology Committee approved a reauthorization bill for the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) on April 19 that would authorize doubling research funding for the agency over 10 years—as the President has recommended—rename the Advanced Technology Program (ATP), and allow universities to take the lead in that program’s projects with industry. The full committee is scheduled to consider the bill on Monday, April 23.

The “Technology Innovation and Manufacturing Stimulation Act of 2007” (H.R. 1868) would change the name of the ATP program to the Technology Innovation Program and allow universities, for the first time, to lead in university-industry projects. This change also would allow universities to retain the intellectual property rights of inventions developed through joint projects with industry. The inability of universities to lead projects and to retain intellectual property rights has discouraged them from participating in the ATP program.

A press release about the markup is available at:

The chairmen and ranking members of the Senate Judiciary Committee and the House Subcommittee on Courts, the Internet, and Intellectual Property on April 19 introduced companion bills in the House and Senate (H.R. 1908, S. 1145) to overhaul the U.S. patent system. The bills, introduced by Senators Patrick Leahy (D-CT) and Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and by Reps. Howard Berman (D-CA) and Lamar Smith (R-TX), are similar to legislation introduced last year.

As it has with prior patent bills, AAU will work with the Association of American Medical Colleges, the American Council on Education, the Council on Governmental Relations, and the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges to review the legislation and provide comments to the House and Senate committees. AAU will convene a conference call of CFR members shortly to discuss the legislation.

According to a joint press release about the new legislation which is on Senator Leahy’s Web site:

“The bill, which is similar to bipartisan legislation introduced last year, updates current patent laws to provide much needed reform for patent seekers and patent holders.

Among many important reforms, the bill would create a pure "first-to-file" system to bring needed clarity and certainty to the U.S. patent system. The American system is the only one in the world that still grants patents to the first inventor rather than the first to file an application. The bill also creates a more streamlined and effective way of challenging the validity and enforceability of patents.”

The full press release and section-by-section analysis are available at:
Comments on last year’s Senate bill (S. 3818) developed by a group of higher education associations, including AAU, are available at: http://www.aau.edu/intellect/Comments_S3818_Patent_Reform_Act_07.pdf.

**OTHER**

**ACE SENDS CAMPUS LEADERS BACKGROUND MATERIALS ON UNIVERSITY RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENT LENDERS**

The American Council on Education (ACE) sent college and university presidents and chancellors on April 17 background materials on university relationships with student lenders. The package, which was sent on behalf of the six presidentially based higher education associations, including AAU, consisted of a letter from ACE President David Ward laying out a series of questions that university leaders are asking on their campuses, an ACE briefing paper on student loans and the current controversy, and a chart comparing proposed regulations and legislation in this area.


**“HOW NIH WORKS” PRESENTATION AVAILABLE ON AAU WEB SITE**

A primer on the National Institutes of Health (NIH) presented at the AAU-sponsored briefing at NIH on April 10 is now available on the AAU Web site. The presentation by Walter T. Schaffer, Senior Scientific Advisor for Extramural Research, includes such information as the organizational structure of the agency, a summary of the NIH budget, grant statistics, types of awards, grant application procedures, and the role of the agency’s PubMed Central in making research results available to the general public.

The presentation can be accessed on the AAU Web site at: http://www.aau.edu/research/How_NIH_Works.pdf.

**INNOVATION TASK FORCE AND PRESIDENT DAN MOTE BRIEF HILL ON ROLE OF BASIC RESEARCH IN INNOVATION**

A group of Members of Congress and university and business leaders on April 17 told a Capitol Hill audience that in order to promote the nation’s economic competitiveness, Congress should double federal funding of basic scientific and engineering research and approve comprehensive authorizing legislation aimed at improving math and science education, welcoming foreign students, and encouraging industry to invest in research and development (R&D). The
recommendations were part of a briefing for Capitol Hill staff cosponsored by the Task Force on the Future of American Innovation, in which AAU participates, and the House R&D Task Force, co-chaired by Reps. Rush Holt (D-NJ) and Judy Biggert (R-IL).

Task Force Chair Doug Comer, Director of Legal Affairs and Technology Policy at Intel Corporation, told the more than 100 participants at the briefing that greater national investment in science and engineering research and education are vital to preserving the nation’s comparative economic advantage, which faces growing challenges from other nations. Both he and Amy Burke, Director of Government Relations for Texas Instruments (TI), discussed examples of federally funded research that has led to major high-tech industries, such as TI’s DLP chip, which is now in many high-definition televisions and commercial projectors.

University of Maryland President Dan Mote added that much work needs to be done to excite young people about careers in science and engineering. He stressed that the perception of opportunity in science and engineering for our children must be nurtured. He added that the federal government also should encourage states to create organizational entities to focus their efforts to improve math and science education and promote innovation.


SETWG CONGRESSIONAL VISITS DAY SET FOR MAY 1-2

The Science-Engineering-Technology Working Group has scheduled its twelfth annual Congressional Visits Day (CVD) for May 1 and 2 in Washington, D.C. AAU is a cosponsor of the event, which brings scientists, engineers, researchers, educators, and technology experts to the capital to underscore the importance of the science and engineering enterprise to the nation’s future.

Members of the CFR may wish to participate in the CVD legislative briefing on Tuesday afternoon, May 1, following that day’s CFR meeting. The CVD briefing will be held from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. in the auditorium of the AAAS building at 1200 New York Avenue, NW.


Those members of the CFR interested in participating in any of the CVD activities or who have questions concerning the event are asked to contact Tobin Smith of the AAU staff at: toby_smith@aau.edu.

AAU PRESIDENT CALLS FOR INCREASED HUMANITIES FUNDING  NEW

AAU President Robert Berdahl urged a House appropriations panel on April 19 to significantly increase funding for the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) in FY08 and proposed a new competitive faculty-graduate student research program at the Endowment. He mentioned that an NEH research grant in 1976 had helped shape his own career as a historian.
Testifying before the House Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee—at its first public witness hearing since 2000—President Berdahl requested $177 million for the Endowment, a $36 million, or 26-percent, increase over the FY07 budget of $141 million. This is the amount endorsed by the broader humanities community, including the National Humanities Alliance (NHA) and the Federation of State Humanities Councils.

President Berdahl suggested that the first priority for the increased funding should be the core research and education divisions that had sustained the greatest cuts since FY94. He also discussed a proposed AAU pilot program for NEH in which faculty and graduate students would submit grant proposals for collaborations in research, similar to those in the natural sciences. AAU staff is following up with subcommittee staff to provide additional information about the proposal.

NHA and the Federation also provided testimony at the hearing; NHA called for a new program similar to 'We the People,' which would focus on global understanding in the humanities.

A copy of President Berdahl’s oral testimony is available on the AAU Web site at: http://www.aau.edu/budget/Test_NEH_4-19-07.pdf.

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