CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE  NEW

The House was out of session today and the Senate was in session but has adjourned. Each chamber will return on Monday, May 7. The Senate will resume consideration of the Food and Drug Administration authorization bill (S. 1082) and later in the week is expected to consider a water projects authorization bill (H.R. 1495).

The House on Monday is expected to appoint conferees on the FY08 budget resolution (H. Con. Res. 99, S. Con. Res. 21). The House also is scheduled to consider bills to reauthorize the Department of Homeland Security (H.R. 1684), intelligence programs (H.R. 2082), and the Community Oriented Policing Services program (H.R. 1700), as well as a small business bill (H.R. 1873).

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

NEGOTIATORS MAKE PROGRESS ON FY08 BUDGET RESOLUTION;
APPROPRIATIONS PROCESS TO BEGIN  NEW

CQToday reports that House and Senate negotiators on the FY08 budget resolution have made sufficient progress toward an agreement that they are ready to hold a formal conference. The House will appoint conferees on Monday and Senate Budget Committee Chairman Kent Conrad (D-ND) said the Senate will follow soon after.

The House version of the budget resolution includes about $7 billion more in discretionary spending than the Senate measure. House Budget Committee Chairman John Spratt (D-SC) told CongressDaily that the final number is likely to be somewhat higher than simply splitting the difference between the two numbers. “We’re trying to get a little bit better deal than that,” he said.
Other issues in the negotiations include how to handle the extension of expiring tax cuts and whether or not to include the House’s reconciliation instructions to save $75 million net over five years by cutting federal subsidies to private student loan companies. Some of the savings from the cuts would be used to expand other student aid programs, such as Pell grants.

*CongressDaily* reports that the latter provision is controversial, in part, because it would allow the Senate to include the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act in filibuster-proof reconciliation legislation. Senate Budget Committee Chairman Kent Conrad (D-ND) has criticized this approach as an abuse of the reconciliation process that would produce negligible savings. *CongressDaily* indicates that Senator Conrad might agree to a higher level of discretionary spending in exchange for other concessions, such as eliminating the House reconciliation instructions.

According to *CQToday*, House Appropriations Committee Chairman David Obey (D-WI) has said his panel will begin subcommittee markups next week, probably beginning with Homeland Security. He hopes to have the first appropriations bill on the House floor the week of May 21.

**NEGOTIATIONS BEGIN ON POST-VETO FY07 SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING BILL**

As expected, earlier this week the President vetoed the FY07 emergency supplemental funding bill (H.R. 1591, H. Rpt. 110-107) and the House failed to override that decision on a vote of 222 to 203. *CQToday* reports that House and Senate Democratic leaders are weighing various plans for how to proceed. Congressional leaders hope to send the President a new version of the bill before the Memorial Day recess, which is the week of May 28.

**HOUSE MEMBERS URGE MAJOR FUNDING INCREASE FOR NEH**

A group of 118 Members of the House, led by Reps. David Price (D-NC) and Phil English (R-PA), sent a letter to House appropriators on April 27 urging them to provide the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) with an FY08 budget of $177 million, a $36-million increase over FY07 funding. The letter states that the increase would allow NEH “to sustain its core programs and extend the reach of its two major initiatives: the ‘We the People’ program and the Digital Humanities Initiative.


**OTHER CONGRESSIONAL DEVELOPMENTS**

**HOUSE APPROVES NSF REAUTHORIZATION WITHOUT AMENDMENTS OPPOSED BY COMMUNITY**

The House overwhelmingly approved legislation to reauthorize the National Science Foundation (NSF) on May 2, while voting down several amendments that the research and higher education communities had mobilized to oppose. The final vote on the bill (H.R. 1867) was 399 to 17.
Among the amendments defeated by the House were two by Reps. John Campbell (R-CA) and Scott Garret (R-NJ) that would have eliminated funding for nine current NSF social sciences projects that the sponsors said represented wasteful spending of taxpayer dollars. The House also voted down amendments by Reps. Campbell and Garrett to reduce the authorized funding levels contained in the bill; an amendment by Tom Price (R-GA) to apply PAYGO rules to provisions in the bill; and an amendment by Dave Weldon (R-FL) to tie NSF funding levels to NASA funding.

Overall, H.R. 1867 provides a three-year authorization that keeps the agency on track to double its budget over 10 years, as recommended in the President’s American Competitiveness Initiative; encourages greater funding success for young investigators and high-risk research projects; and expands NSF programs to improve science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education.

In advance of House floor consideration of the bill, representatives of individual colleges and universities weighed in with their congressional delegations against the amendments of concern. Several associations—including AAU, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges—also sent letters urging Members to vote against the amendments. The AAU letter is available at: http://www.aau.edu/research/Ltr_House_HR1867_5207.pdf.

**HOUSE APPROVES NIST AUTHORIZATION BILL NEW**

The House on May 3 approved a three-year reauthorization of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) by a vote of 385 to 23. The measure (H.R. 1868) would authorize doubling the funding for NIST’s lab programs over 10 years, as called for in the President’s American Competitiveness Initiative, and reauthorize the Manufacturing Extension Partnership program. The bill also includes a provision to rename the Advanced Technology Program (ATP) as the Technology Innovation Program and allow universities to lead joint university-industry projects and retain the associated intellectual property rights. According to CQToday, the House met Republican concerns about the revamped technology program by adopting a bipartisan floor amendment that ensures research projects focus on areas of critical national need and defines “high-risk, high-reward” research.

The White House issued a statement opposing H.R. 1868 on May 1, criticizing the new Technology Innovation program as industrial policy and charging that the bill does not authorize the doubling of NIST core programs over 10 years. However, a bipartisan group of House Science Committee members sent a letter to their colleagues on May 2 rebutting the Administration’s comments on the authorized funding levels and explaining other elements of the bill.

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