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CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE  NEW

The House has recessed for the Memorial Day holiday and will return to session on Tuesday, June 5. The Senate has been in session today to continue consideration of comprehensive immigration reform (S. 1348), with no roll call votes. After the Senate recesses today for Memorial Day, the chamber also will return to session on Tuesday, June 5, when it is expected to spend another week of debate on the immigration bill.

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

CONGRESS SENDS WHITE HOUSE FY07 SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING BILL  NEW

The Senate late Thursday cleared the FY07 emergency supplemental funding bill (H.R. 2206), sending the $120 billion measure to the President, who is expected to sign it. Congressional approval of the package ended a standoff with the President over a proposed timetable for withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq. President Bush had vetoed a previous version of the package over that provision and had threatened to do so again.

CQToday reports that along with funding for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, H.R. 2206 contains about $17 billion in spending not requested by the Administration for such items as the State Children’s Health Insurance Program, Gulf Coast recovery, agricultural disaster relief, and wildfire suppression. It also includes compromise legislation to increase the federal minimum wage and provide tax cuts to small business.
In subcommittee markup on May 23, the House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee approved an FY08 funding bill that would provide $4.516 billion for the Department of Energy Office of Science. The total is $719 million, or nearly 19 percent, above the FY07 level and $118 million, or 2.7 percent, above the Administration’s FY08 request.

*CQToday* reports that Subcommittee Chairman Peter Visclosky (D-IN) said the measure also includes nearly $1.9 billion for climate-change research and technologies, which is a 30-percent increase; $235 million for vehicle technologies, up from $176 million in FY07; $250 million for biofuel programs, up from $179 million in FY07; and $1.9 billion for renewable energy programs, up from $1.5 billion in FY07.

Additional details about the bill are likely to be unavailable until after the full committee markup, expected in June.

**HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ADDS $19 MILLION FOR NEH**

A House appropriations subcommittee on May 23 approved an extra $19 million above the President’s FY08 request for the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), for total funding of $160 million. The bill approved by the House Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee would allocate the extra funding as follows: $1.4 million for core research and education programs, $5 million for state humanities councils, $3.8 million for the We the People initiative, $3 million for digital humanities, and $4 million in undistributed funds. The subcommittee mark does not specify creation of the faculty-graduate student research and education program proposed by AAU.

**OTHER CONGRESSIONAL DEVELOPMENTS**

**NINE SENATORS SIGN LETTER ON DOD UNIVERSITY RESEARCH INITIATIVE**

Senators Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Susan Collins (R-ME) last week circulated among their colleagues a letter to Senate Armed Services Committee leaders urging them to include in the FY08 Defense authorization bill at least $45 million extra for University Research Initiative (URI) programs in the Department of Defense. The letter closed with nine signatures. Senators Kennedy and Collins had provided only one day for their colleagues to review the letter.

The following Senators signed the letter: Kennedy, Collins, Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), Hillary Clinton (D-NY), Chris Dodd (D-CT), Pete Domenici (R-NM), John Kerry (D-MA), Pat Roberts (R-KS), and Debbie Stabenow (D-MI).


**HOUSE S&T COMMITTEE REMOVES RECOUPMENT PROVISION FROM ARPA-E BILL; AAU AND NASULGC THANK PANEL FOR THE CHANGE**
The House Science and Technology Committee on May 23 approved legislation (H.R. 364) to create an advanced research projects agency at the Department of Energy (ARPA-E), after agreeing to remove a “recoupment” provision that had been opposed by AAU and the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC). The provision, which was eliminated as part of the manager’s amendment, would have required institutions to repay the government’s investment in a research project funded through ARPA-E if that research led to a product that was commercialized and made money.

AAU and NASULGC issued a statement thanking Committee Chairman Bart Gordon (D-TN) and Ranking Member Ralph Hall (R-TX) for removing the damaging provision (See: [http://www.aau.edu/research/AAU_NASULGC_ARPAE_TY_5-23-07.pdf](http://www.aau.edu/research/AAU_NASULGC_ARPAE_TY_5-23-07.pdf)).

Last Friday, the two associations sent the committee leaders a letter opposing the recoupment provision on the basis that it would create a serious disincentive for “out-of-the-box” research, particularly at universities. (See [http://www.aau.edu/research/AAU-NASULGC-ARPA-E_5-18-07.pdf](http://www.aau.edu/research/AAU-NASULGC-ARPA-E_5-18-07.pdf)).

**SENATOR ALEXANDER ISSUES STATEMENT OPPOSING PROPOSED ACCREDITATION REGULATIONS**

Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) issued a statement on May 24 that calls for less regulation of higher education and specifically opposes the Department of Education’s plans to expand federal control of higher education accreditation. In his remarks, which can be found in the May 24 Congressional Record, Senator Alexander said:

“I believe excellence in American higher education comes from institutional autonomy, markets, competition, choice for students, federalism and limited federal regulation. The Department is proposing to restrict autonomy, choice, and competition. Such changes are so fundamental that only Congress should consider them. For that reason, if necessary, I will offer an amendment to the Higher Education Act to prohibit the Department from issuing any final regulations until Congress acts. Congress needs to legislate first. Then the Department can regulate.”

The Senator, who is a former governor, secretary of education, and university president, praised American higher education but also offered a number of criticisms. He said that colleges and universities are doing too little to improve K-12 education, are allowing political “one-sidedness” on campus, and are operating inefficiently. He also mentioned rising tuitions and student debt but noted that rising costs “are lower than most Americans realize” and are caused largely by states’ failure to fund higher education due to increasing Medicaid costs.

Senator Alexander suggested that a better way for the federal government to encourage greater higher education accountability would be a combination of “jawboning,” a Baldridge-type prize for accountability in higher education, and research and development grants to states, institutions, accreditors, and assessment researchers for developing new and better measures of accountability.

Senator Alexander’s statement is available in the Congressional Record at: [http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getpage.cgi?dbname=2007_record&page=S6833&position=all](http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getpage.cgi?dbname=2007_record&page=S6833&position=all).
The White House announced on May 22 that the President will nominate Diane Auer Jones as Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education at the Department of Education. Ms. Jones is well known in the higher education research community, having served as director of government affairs at Princeton University and as Deputy to the Associate Director for Science at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. She currently is Principal Deputy Secretary for Postsecondary Education at the Department of Education.