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CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE NEW

The House and Senate have been out of session this week for the July Fourth recess. The Senate will return to session on Monday, July 9, the House on Tuesday, July 10.

When the Senate returns on July 9, it will begin consideration of the Defense authorization bill (H.R. 1585), which is expected to take up to two weeks of floor time.

When the House returns on July 10, the chamber will take up H.R. 2669, the FY08 budget reconciliation bill (see item below). The House also may consider legislation regarding the Food and Drug Administration’s drug approval process and federal housing programs.

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEES ANTICIPATE BUSY WEEK NEW

The House and Senate will not consider any of the FY08 appropriations bills next week. However, the appropriations committees will be hard at work.

CQToday reports that the House is holding off floor consideration of appropriations bills to give the Appropriations Committee time to complete work on the six remaining bills that have not yet passed the House. Appropriations bills will start to move on the House floor the week of July 16, giving Members three weeks to have completed all 12 before the start of the August recess. Although the Appropriations Committee has not released its schedule for next week, the full committee is expected to consider the Transportation-HUD bill and possibly the Labor-HHS-Education and Commerce-Justice-Science bills. The Defense and Agriculture funding bills are the only two that have not been considered in subcommittee.
The Senate will focus next week on the Defense authorization bill. However, the Appropriations Committee is expected to take up the Financial Services and Transportation-HUD bills, which will leave only the Defense and Agriculture measures to be considered, as in the House. The full Senate has not yet considered any of the appropriations bills. CQToday says that Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) would like to pass a few appropriations bills before the August recess, but he has set no firm dates for action.

The status of the FY08 appropriations bills is available on the THOMAS Web site at: http://thomas.loc.gov/home/approp/app08.html.

HOUSE RECONCILIATION BILL SLATED FOR FLOOR ACTION NEXT WEEK

The FY08 budget reconciliation bill (H.R. 2669) reported from the House Education & Labor Committee will be considered on the House floor next week. Members must submit possible amendments to the Rules Committee by today, July 6. Reports indicate that Rep. Howard McKeon (R-CA) plans to offer an amendment to increase new mandatory spending on the Pell Grant by eliminating new mandatory dollars for other programs in the bill, including GEAR UP, TRIO, Perkins Loans, Hispanic Serving Institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and Tribal Colleges. It is unclear whether the amendment will affect the proposed cut to student loan interest rates. The list of submitted amendments is available at: http://www.rules.house.gov/amendment_details.aspx?NewsID=2720

The Senate is unlikely to consider its version of reconciliation before the week of July 24 because the chamber is expected to spend the next two weeks on the FY08 Defense authorization bill. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee Chairman Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Ranking Member Michael Enzi (R-WY) would like the reconciliation bill considered at the same time as the committee's bill to reauthorize the Higher Education Act (S. 1642), but it is unclear if that will happen.

OTHER

HIGHER EDUCATION ASSOCIATIONS THANK DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FOR RECONSIDERING EXPANDED IPEDS  NEW

The higher education community sent a letter June 29 to the Department of Education thanking officials for withdrawing many of the suggested changes to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) that would have imposed significant new financial and staffing burdens on colleges and universities.

The letter said, in part:

“...we applaud the Department of Education for seeking ways to reexamine the current burden estimates. We encourage the Department to undertake a serious and thorough review of the data collection efforts required across campus. We are convinced that taking this essential step will produce a more realistic means of calculating the impact of regulations on the campus community and will result in a more accurate baseline for analysis of any impending IPEDS changes....We look forward to working with you to refine IPEDS to continue to provide accurate, appropriate and essential data on U.S. postsecondary education.”
The letter, led by the American Council on Education (ACE), is available on the ACE Web site at:

As reported earlier (CFR Weekly Wrap-up, June 6, 2007), the Department of Education in a May 31 Federal Register notice proposed to significantly expand the reporting requirements for colleges and universities under IPEDS. The higher education community wrote to the Department on March 15 and March 26 expressing concern that the value of collecting the additional information was not commensurate with the significant added financial and staffing burdens it would impose. The Department responded by withdrawing the proposals from consideration and stating that it would “look into” re-estimating the institutional reporting burden.

A copy of the March 26 association letter is also available on the ACE Web site, at:

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