Friday, August 10, 2007

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CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE

Congress is out of session for the August recess. Both chambers will return on Tuesday, September 4.

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

APPROPRIATIONS OVERVIEW

The House approved the last of its 12 FY08 appropriations bills, Defense (H.R. 3222), on August 5 before leaving for the August recess. The Senate has approved just one appropriations bill, Homeland Security (S. 1644), which is passed on July 26. The Senate Appropriations Committee has marked up all of its FY08 appropriations bills except Defense. No date for markup of the Defense appropriations measure has been announced.

FY08 APPROPRIATIONS MATERIALS UPDATED ON AAU WEB SITE

AAU has updated its FY08 appropriations charts and summaries for the major research agencies that it follows. Those updated materials are available on the FY08 Budget and Appropriations page at:  http://www.aau.edu/budget/fy2008.cfm#appropriations.

EXECUTIVE BRANCH
EDUCATION SECRETARY LAYS OUT ISSUES IN RECONCILIATION BILLS

Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings has raised a number of objections to the House and Senate versions of the FY08 reconciliation bill (H.R. 2669, S. 1762) in a letter to lawmakers dated August 3. Both measures, which are now in a House-Senate conference, would cut more than $18 billion over five years in lender subsidies, most of which would be reinvested in student grant aid and student loan improvements.

The Secretary’s letter criticizes the bills for redirecting too little of their savings to needy students in school and for creating new mandatory and entitlement programs. The letter states, “The Administration could not support a final bill that diverts resources away from larger Pell Grants for needy students toward such provisions as an interest rate reduction, several new mandatory programs, the Senate’s current special allowance payment amendments, tuition price controls, the Upward Bound priority change which undermines the programs’ effectiveness in serving at-risk students, and an objectionable unmodified student loan auction provision.” The letter goes on to say that “if such a bill were presented to the President…his senior advisors would recommend that he veto the bill.”

A copy of the Secretary’s letter is available on the AAU Web site at: http://www.aau.edu/budget/Ltr_Spellings_Recon_8-3-07.pdf.

--Updated AAU Chart Shows Differences in House and Senate Reconciliation Bills and Cost Estimates for Specific Provisions

AAU staff has updated the chart that shows the differences between the House and Senate versions of the FY08 reconciliation bill, along with cost estimates for various provisions in the two bills. The documents are available on the AAU Web site at: http://www.aau.edu/education/student.cfm.

OTHER

ASSOCIATIONS SEND STATEMENT FOLLOWING UP ON HOUSE TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER HEARING  UPDATED

Four associations sent a letter to the House Science Subcommittee on Technology and Innovation on August 9 providing information about the continuing value of the Bayh-Dole Act in promoting U.S. technology transfer and innovation. The letter sent by AAU, the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, the Council on Governmental Relations, and the Association of American Medical Colleges, followed up on the subcommittee’s July 17 hearing that examined the past and future of technology transfer.

The letter to Subcommittee Chairman David Wu (D-OR) and Ranking Member Phil Gingrey (R-GA) focused on the fact that the Bayh-Dole Act, which allows universities and other nonprofit organizations to patent inventions they develop using federal funds, has led to thousands of new businesses and products since it was enacted in 1980.

The letter also addressed concerns raised by some industry representatives at the hearing that universities’ intellectual property practices can make collaborations difficult. “We note that, significantly, all of the witnesses testified that they see no need for major legislative changes to Bayh-Dole,” said the letter. The statement added that other factors of academic culture may
contribute to challenges in university-industry collaborations, including “freedom to publish (including the ability to publish negative results), sustaining an open environment for faculty and students conducive to training new scientists and workers, management of conflicts of interest, honoring philanthropic commitments, and generally safeguarding an institution’s academic mission.”

A copy of the associations’ statement is available on the AAU Web site at:

**TASK FORCE ON INNOVATION SPONSORS VIDEO COMPETITION ON HOW SCIENCE HAS CHANGED AMERICAN LIFE  UPDATED**

The Task Force on the Future of American Innovation, in which AAU participates, is sponsoring a YouTube video contest in which individuals—particularly students—are invited to submit three-minute videos that illustrate how scientific discoveries resulting from federally funded research in the physical sciences have changed our lives. Videos can focus on past transformational research (the YouTube page points to two lists of examples) or showcase what may happen in the future. Participants are urged to let their creativity flow, with music, humor, or other formats to help celebrate American innovation. The deadline for submissions is Monday, September 10.

The top five videos selected will be posted on the Task Force Web site and showcased at a Capitol Hill event on October 4, which will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the launching of Sputnik by the Soviet Union and the ensuing American investments in research and education.

The producer of the winning video will win an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C. for two people from within the United States to attend the Capitol Hill event. The prize will include round-trip travel expenses, one night hotel accommodations, and a scholarship check for $1,000. The four runners-up will each receive a check for $300.


Questions about the competition should be directed to Tawanda W. Johnson at opa@aps.org.

**DIANE AUER JONES CONFIRMED AS ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION  NEW**

The Senate has confirmed Diane Auer Jones as Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education at the U.S. 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 Associate Director for Science at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. Most recently, she has been Principal Deputy Secretary for Postsecondary Education at the Department of Education.

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