CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE  NEW

The House last met on December 16 and will reconvene on Saturday, December 19, for a pro forma session, with no recorded votes. The House may need to meet again before the holidays to consider must-pass bills if the Senate makes any changes to them; otherwise, it is scheduled to return to session on Tuesday, January 12.

The Senate today continued consideration of the FY10 Defense appropriations bill (H.R. 3326), with a final vote expected Saturday morning, December 19. (See details of the bill below.) With health care legislation still pending, the Senate is expected to stay in session until at least next Wednesday, December 23, and possibly longer. CongressDaily reports that the chamber may need to return between Christmas and New Year’s if it does not approve an increase in the statutory debt limit earlier.

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

HOUSE APPROVES END-OF-SESSION BILLS  UPDATED

The House on December 16 approved four end-of-session bills that include several short-term extensions of current law and other provisions which, if enacted, would punt a number of difficult policy and funding decisions to February, when the Administration presents its FY11 budget.

The House first considered the FY10 Defense appropriations bill (H.R. 3326), which members approved by a vote of 395 to 34. The bill carries two-month extensions of a variety of programs,
including jobless benefits, Medicare payments to physicians, provisions of the USA PATRIOT Act, and federal highway programs. (See below for details on Defense research funding.) The House also approved by voice vote stopgap funding for Defense programs through December 23 (H.J. Res. 64) to sustain Pentagon operations until the Senate can act on the FY10 Defense bill. The House then approved by a vote of 218 to 214 legislation (H.R. 4314) to raise the federal debt ceiling to a level expected to cover new federal borrowing through mid-February. And finally, the House approved by a vote of 217 to 212 legislation to bolster state aid for jobs retention and creation (H.R. 2847), which is discussed below. The Senate is not expected to take up the jobs package until next year.

**HOUSE INFRASTRUCTURE BILL INCLUDES FUNDING FOR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS AND COLLEGE WORK STUDY  UPDATED**

The House-passed Jobs for Mainstream Act (H.R. 2847) would provide $154 billion for job retention and creation programs and activities, paid for in part with $75 billion of unspent funds from the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP). The Washington Post writes that the measure, which has virtually no chance of consideration in the Senate this year, is a “largely symbolic” bill that is “a reflection of Democrats’ belief that addressing the nation’s unemployment crisis will have to be their top priority when they return to business in January.” The bill includes funding for a variety of emergency relief programs for the unemployed, as well as assistance to states and local governments aimed at avoiding government layoffs and supporting infrastructure repair and modernization.

The bill includes an additional $300 million for the College Work-Study program, as well as the following aid for public colleges and universities:

“Education Jobs Fund: $23 billion for an Education Jobs Fund to help States support an estimated 250,000 education jobs over the next two years. 95% of the funds will be allocated by States to school districts and public institutions of higher education to retain or create jobs to provide educational services and to modernize, renovate, and repair public education facilities. The remaining 5% of funds is reserved for State education-related jobs and administration of the Education Jobs Fund.”

**DEFENSE BASIC RESEARCH FUNDING TO INCREASE 2.2 PERCENT IN FY10 NEW**

The FY10 Defense appropriations bill (H.R. 3326) was approved 395-34 earlier this week by the House and is scheduled for final Senate consideration tomorrow, December 19. It would modestly increase funding for 6.1 basic research over the FY09 appropriation and the Administration’s FY10 budget request.

The final bill would provide $1.882 billion for basic research. This is $40.2 million, or 2.2 percent, above the FY09 level of $1.842 billion, and $83.9 million, or 4.7 percent, above the Administration's request of about $1.798 billion.

For the broader Science & Technology (S&T) category, the bill would provide $13.521 billion, a slight increase of $34.5 million, or 0.3 percent, above the FY09 level of $13.486 billion and $1.871 billion, or 16.1 percent, above the Administration’s request of $11.650 billion. S&T
programs include defense-wide and military service funding for 6.1 basic research, 6.2 applied research, and 6.3 advanced technology development.

Within this total, applied research (6.2 programs) would receive $5.061 billion, a $51.8 million, or 1-percent, cut from the FY09 level of $5.113 billion, but an $814.3 million, or 19.2-percent, increase over the Administration's request of $4.247 billion. Advanced technology development (6.3 programs) would receive $6.578 billion, a $46.1 million, or 0.7-percent, increase above the FY09 level of $6.532 billion, and a $973 million, or 17.4-percent, increase over the Administration's request of $5.605 billion.

The funding breakout for 6.1 basic research and 6.2 applied research across the services is as follows:

- Army 6.1: $434.0 million, a $5.2 million or 1.2-percent cut from FY09;
- Army 6.2: $1.344 billion, a $110.3 million or 8.9-percent increase above FY09;
- Navy 6.1: $551.7 million, a $4.3 million or 0.8-percent increase above FY09;
- Navy 6.2: $722.0 million, a $54.4 million or 7-percent cut from FY09;
- Air Force 6.1: $484.8 million, a $15.9 million or 3.4-percent increase above FY09;
- Air Force 6.2: $1.226 billion, a $9.4 million or 0.8-percent increase above FY09;
- Defense-wide 6.1: $411.7 million, a $25.3 million or 6.5-percent increase above FY09; and
- Defense-wide 6.2: $1,769.2 billion, a $117.1 million or 6.2-percent cut from FY09.

The bill would provide $80 million for the National Defense Education Program. This is an increase of $11 million, or 16 percent, above the FY09 level of $69 million, but $10 million less than the Administration's requested level of $90 million.

For the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), the bill would provide $3 billion in FY10. A press release from the House Appropriations Committee notes that funding for DARPA is cut by $246 million from the Administration’s FY10 request because of “chronic under-execution.” The bill’s “explanatory statement” notes that the measure includes $85 million for new starts at DARPA, which can be obligated only after the new DARPA director provides details to the congressional defense committees.

Overall, the bill includes $80.538 billion for Defense Research, Development, Test and Evaluation (RDT&E). This is a slight increase of $17 million, or 0.02 percent, above the FY09 level, and $1.59 billion, or 2 percent, above the Administration’s FY09 request.

A further breakout of the Defense appropriations levels for accounts of interest to research universities, including the University Research Initiative accounts, is available on the AAU web site.

OTHER

CGS, ETS REPORT STATUS OF COMMISSION TO STUDY FUTURE OF U.S. GRADUATE EDUCATION
The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) and the Educational Testing Service (ETS) recently provided an update on their joint Commission on the Future of Graduate Education, which plans to release its report at the CGS Legislative Forum on April 29, 2010.

The commission, which is comprised of university and industry leaders, is examining the role of graduate education in meeting the challenges of the 21st century and maintaining the preeminence of U.S. graduate schools in the face of rising global competition. The report will make recommendations for policymakers, university leaders, and business leaders on how their sectors can each help ensure that the U.S. produces an appropriate number of graduate degree recipients with the skills and knowledge necessary to meet future workforce needs.

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