Congressional Outlook

Week of April 13

The House and Senate are back in session after a two week break. In honor of the April 15 tax-filing deadline, the House has scheduled floor votes that day on bills to repeal the estate tax, which affects about 5,500 wealthy American households a year, eliminate capital gains taxes on assets passed to heirs, and make permanent the federal deduction for state and local sales taxes. Votes also are planned on a measure that would alter requirements for the disclosure of points and fees in some mortgage transactions.

In the Senate, Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has said he plans to bring to a vote House-passed legislation that would permanently change the way Medicare determines what to pay physicians so that Congress can stop enacting "doc fixes" to override the Sustainable Growth Rate formula. The last "doc fix" expired at the end of March.

It is unclear if anything changed during the recess that might end the stalemate over abortion language in a human-trafficking bill that has been in limbo on the Senate floor. McConnell has said the Senate won't take up Attorney General nominee Loretta Lynch until the chamber completes the trafficking legislation.

Week in Review

FCC Publishes Final Rule on Net Neutrality
The FCC's net neutrality order was published in the Federal Register today, which is likely to kick off legal challenges from trade groups, wireless carriers, cable companies, and Internet service providers. Two groups, USTelecom and Alamo Broadband, filed suits prior to the FCC's official publication. This action by the FCC is to ensure open access to the internet. Industry executives have said they support the principles of not blocking Web traffic, but they oppose the FCC's decision to regulate broadband service with the same rules it uses to impose regulations on the phone network. Read more...

**Clock is Ticking on Transportation Reauthorization**

House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bill Shuster (R-PA) told reporters during his two-day "road show" last week on long-term transportation funding that he plans to meet with House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Paul Ryan (R-WI) as early as this week. Pressure is mounting for Congress to identify a long-term funding mechanism for highway and mass transit programs ahead of a May 31 deadline. State and federal lawmakers and stakeholder groups held events across the country April 9 as part of the national "Stand Up For Transportation Day" to bring attention to the need for federal transportation funding. Read more...

**EPA Sends WOTUS Rule to White House for Interagency Review**

In a blog post last week, EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy announced that an updated draft of the Clean Water Act rule defining Waters of the United States (WOTUS) has been sent to the Office of Management and Budget for interagency review. The EPA and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began the controversial rulemaking process last April, and have stated that the updated draft rule addresses concerns raised by many stakeholders. While the text of the updated rule will not be available until it is finalized, Administrator McCarthy's blog post provides a preview of the changes that have been made.

**EPA Adds Drinking Water to Compliance Dashboard**

EPA has added a Safe Drinking Water Act tab to its compliance dashboard, a tool that provides an overview of the Enforcement and Compliance History Online (ECHO) dataset. The dashboard provides annual statistics for public water systems and enforcement actions and allows users to connect to detailed facility reports for water systems in their community. The ECHO compliance dashboard also includes tabs for the Clean Water Act's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), the Clean Air Act, and Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA).

**Congressional Schedule**

**Monday, April 13**

Tuesday, April 14

- Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pension Full Committee markup of S___, the "Every Child Achieves Act of 2015" and S___, the "WIOA Technical Amendments Act."
- Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Subcommittee on Superfund, Waste Management, and Regulatory Oversight hearing on "Oversight of the Management of the Federal Environmental Protection, Chemical Safety, and Fish and Wildlife Agencies."
- Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Full Committee hearing on "Reducing Unnecessary Duplication in Federal Programs: Billions More Could Be Saved."
- Senate Commerce Science and Transportation Full Committee hearing on the "Federal Aviation Administration Reauthorization."
- Senate Finance Full Committee hearing on "Creating a More Efficient and Level Playing Field: Audit and Appeals Issues in Medicare."
- Senate Foreign Relations Full Committee markup of S. 615, the "Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015."
- House Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies hearing on the "Early Education" budget.
- House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials hearing on "Oversight of the Ongoing Rail, Pipeline and Hazmat Rulemakings."
- House Education and the Workforce Committee Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions hearing on "Five Years of Broken Promises: How the President's Health Care Law is Affecting America's Workplaces."
- House Judiciary Full Committee hearing on "Oversight of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement."
- House Energy and Commerce Committee Subcommittee on Energy and Power hearing on "The EPA's Proposed 111(d) Rule for Existing Power Plants and the 'Ratepayer Protection Act.'"
- House Foreign Affairs Committee Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade hearing on "The Crude Oil Export Ban: Helpful or Hurtful?"
- House Natural Resources Committee Subcommittee on Water, Power and Oceans hearing on "Proposed Federal Water Grabs and Their Potential Impacts on States, Water and Power Users, and Landowners."

Wednesday, April 15

- House Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Energy and Water markup of the FY

- Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Full Committee hearing on “IRS Challenges in Implementing the Affordable Care Act.”
- Senate Environment and Public Works Full Committee hearing on the President’s FY 2016 budget request for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.
- Senate Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies hearing on the FY 2016 military construction and military family housing budget request for select Combatant Commanders and select Defense Agencies.
- Senate Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Homeland Security hearing on “From Protection to Partnership: Funding the DHS role in Cybersecurity.”
- Senate Armed Services Committee Subcommittee on Strategic Forces hearing on the National Nuclear Security Administration plans and programs in review of the Defense Authorization Request for FY2016 and the Future Years Defense Program.
- House Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies hearing on the budget for ebola.
- House Education and the Workforce Full Committee hearing on “Serving Students and Families through Child Nutrition Programs.”
- House Science, Space and Technology Full Committee hearing on “The President’s UN Climate Pledge: Scientifically Justified or a New Tax on Americans?”
- House Homeland Security Full Committee “Roundtable Discussion on Boston Marathon Bombings Anniversary.”
- House Small Business Full Committee hearing on “Tax Reform: Ensuring that Main Street Isn’t Left Behind.”
- House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Subcommittee on Government Operations hearing on “The Taxpayer Advocate’s Annual Report.”

**Thursday, April 16**

- Senate Energy and Natural Resources Full Committee hearing on the Energy Information Administration’s annual energy outlook for 2015.
- Senate Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Homeland Security hearing on the FY 2016 budget request and funding justification for the U.S. Department of Education.
- Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Full Committee hearing on “Regulatory Burdens to Obtaining Mortgage Credit.”
- Senate Judiciary Full Committee markup of S. 665, the "Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu National Blue Alert Act of 2015" and S.135, the "Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Program Reauthorization Act of 2015."
- Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests and Mining hearing on "The Bureau of Land Management's Final Hydraulic
Fracturing Rule.”

- Senate Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies hearing on the FY 2016 budget request and funding justification for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.
- House Financial Services Committee Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance hearing on “The Future of Housing in America: Increasing Private Sector Participation in Affordable Housing.”
- House Energy and Commerce Committee Subcommittee on Health hearing on “Medicare Post Acute Care Delivery and Options to Improve It.”