Congressional Outlook

Week of February 23rd

The House and Senate return this week with all eyes on funding for the Department of Homeland Security. The department's funding expires this Friday, February 27, and this afternoon, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell will once again hold a vote on a House-passed bill to fund the agency, complete with riders defunding President Barack Obama's immigration executive actions. It will be the fourth such vote in three weeks, and will almost certainly fail again with Democrats refusing to anything other than a "clean" funding bill. McConnell could cave to Democrats and push through a clean funding bill or short-term continuing resolution, but it would likely fail in the House. McConnell could also eliminate the ability to filibuster legislation and pass the bill with a simple majority, but the White House would veto it.

The FCC is set to vote Thursday on Chairman Tom Wheeler's open Internet rules, and it's taking up another issue at the same meeting: whether the commission should intervene on behalf of municipal broadband projects. The House Telecommunications Subcommittee is holding a hearing the day before the FCC vote, and judging by its title - "The Uncertain Future of the Internet" - it's clear that the panel's members intend to oppose the chairman's plan.

The House Energy and Commerce Committee's Environment and Economy Subcommittee will hold a hearing this Friday on the challenges small communities face in trying to upgrade aging drinking water infrastructure. Smaller communities, especially in rural areas, deal with upgrade costs that can be disproportionately high because pipes must extend across long distances, while the customer bases are smaller and often low income households. The federal government helps communities pay for upgrades through the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (SRF), which makes low-cost loans to communities. This year, in the wake of last summer's shut off of drinking water to 500,000 people in Toledo, Ohio, the Obama Administration is proposing an increase of $279 million for the Drinking Water SRF, paired with a $333 million cut to the Clean Water SRF.
Federal Judge Blocks Immigration Order

Last Monday, U.S. District Court Judge Andrew Hanen blocked President Obama's Executive Order on Immigration, which offers work permits and protection from deportation to an estimated 4.1 million undocumented immigrants, while he mulls a final ruling. In response, the Obama administration said Tuesday it would delay implementing the order, just a day before it was scheduled to go into effect. The Justice Department today will file a request to temporarily stay the court order. Stay tuned...

House Bill Introduced to Update Army Corps Dam Management

House Democrats have introduced a bill that would direct the Army Corps of Engineers to incorporate modern weather and runoff forecasting into its dam operations. This comes at a time when water managers in the State of California are facing the prospect of having to release some stored water from their reservoirs during one of the worst ongoing droughts in the state's history due to rigid Corps' flood rules.

Rep. Jared Huffman (D-CA), the ranking Democrat on the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Power and Oceans, reintroduced legislation earlier this month that would require the Corps to re-evaluate the manuals that dictate operations at dams where the Corps manages flood control, if a local community makes the request. The legislation would have the Corps work with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to make sure that the operations manuals account for the latest weather forecasting capabilities. The Corps has said that updating these manuals is expensive and time-consuming. Democratic co-sponsors of the legislation are California Reps. John Garamendi, Doris Matsui, Jackie Speier, Scott Peters, Alan Lowenthal, Grace Napolitano, Mike Thompson, Ami Bera, Zoe Lofgren, Jerry McNerney and Rep. Matt Cartwright of Pennsylvania.

Congressional Schedule

Tuesday, February 24

- Senate Energy and Natural Resources Full Committee hearing to examine the President's proposed budget request for FY 16 for the Department of Interior.
- Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Full Committee hearing on the Agriculture Act of 2014 implementation after one year and Farm Credit Administration pending nominations.

Wednesday, February 25

- House Energy and Commerce Committee Subcommittee on Communications and
Technology hearing on "the Uncertain Future of the Internet."

- House Homeland Security Full Committee hearing "Examining the President's Cybersecurity Information Sharing Proposal."
- House Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Labor, Health, and Human Services, Educations and Related Agencies hearing on the FY 16 Health and Human Services budget.
- House Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government oversight hearing on the IRS.
- House Agriculture Full Committee hearing "to launch the top-to-bottom review of the SNAP program."
- House Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies hearing on the FY 16 Department of Agriculture Office of the Secretary budget.
- House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation hearing on the FY 16 Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Programs budget.
- House Judiciary Full Committee hearing on the "Unconstitutionality of Obama's Executive Actions on Immigration."
- House Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies oversight hearing the Department of Justice, Department of Commerce, and National Aeronautics and Space Administration.
- House Budget Full Committee Member's Day hearing.
- House Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies hearing on the FY 16 Department of Housing and Urban Development budget.
- House Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies hearing on the FY 16 Department of Interior budget.
- House Oversight and Government Reform Full Committee hearing on the "FCC Process: Examining the Relationship between the FCC and the White House."
- House Small Business Full Committee hearing on "The SBA Budget for FY 16: Does it Meet the Needs of America's Small Businesses?"
- Senate Environment and Public Works Full Committee hearing to examine MAP-21 reauthorization, focusing on perspectives from owners, operators, and users of the system.

Thursday, February 26

- House Oversight and Government Reform Full Committee hearing on "From Health Care Enrollment to Tax Filing: A PPACA Update."
- House Transportation and Infrastructure Full Committee hearing on "Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill: Laying the Foundation for U.S. Economic Growth and Job Creation Part II."
- House Financial Services Committee Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance hearing on "The Future of Housing in America: Oversight of the Federal Housing Administration -
Part II.

- House Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies hearing on the Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service budget.
- House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health business meeting on the FY 16 Department of Health and Human Services budget.
- House Armed Services Full Committee hearing on "the President's Request for an Authorization for the Military Use of Force."
- House Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies hearing on the FY 16 Department of Transportation budget.
- House Agriculture Full Committee hearing "to better understand the SNAP population through published research."
- House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Subcommittee on the Interior hearing "Examining the Impacts of EPA Air and Water Regulations on the States and the American People."
- House Homeland Security Committee Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence hearing on "Addressing Remaining Gaps in Federal and State and Local Information Sharing."
- Senate Energy and Natural Resources Full Committee hearings to examine the President's proposed budget request for FY 16 Forest Service.
- Senate Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies hearing to review the FY 16 funding request and budget justification for the U.S. Department of Commerce.

**Friday, February 27**

- House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Subcommittee on Government Operations hearing on "Ensuring Government Transparency through FOIA Reform."
- House Energy and Commerce Committee Subcommittee on Environment and the Economy hearing on "The Needs of Drinking Water Systems in Rural and Smaller Communities."
- House Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies hearing on the Department of Agriculture Under Secretary for Natural Resources and the Environment, Natural Resources Conservation Service.