Week of April 28th

After a two-week recess, the House and Senate return to Washington this week. Appropriators in both chambers are gearing up to write the 12 annual spending bills, and work on the annual defense authorization bill will continue in the armed services committees. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) stated that his chamber will focus on nominations, legislation to increase the minimum wage and a package to renew expired or expiring tax breaks.

The minimum-wage bill, S. 2223, may be difficult to pass through the Senate chamber because it is not clear that all 55 members of the Democratic caucus will back the measure, and there may not be enough Republican support. The measure is likely dead on arrival in the House.

The tax extender package has moved to the top of the tax agenda as efforts to rewrite the tax code have stalled. In addition to the appropriations bills and defense authorization, House leaders also are prepared to hold votes on a bill, H.R. 10 that would update federal programs supporting charter schools.

Areas where bipartisan, bicameral deals still seem possible include:

**Patents:** One is legislation to curb abusive patent litigation. The House passed a bill to curb abusive patent litigation with broad bipartisan support in December. The Senate Judiciary Committee has had its bill on the markup agenda for four dates so far, and is expected to try again after the recess. Senators John Cornyn (R-TX) and Charles Schumer (D-NY) have been working on a compromise to help the Senate bill move forward.

**Water Projects:** House and Senate negotiators have been working behind the scenes on a compromise version of H.R. 3080, which would authorize water development projects by the Army Corps of Engineers. The House and Senate versions had broad support and the compromise will likely be supported, as well.

**Job Training Programs:** There appears to be new life in an effort to reauthorize job training programs under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). In March 2013, the House passed H.R. 803, which would consolidate or eliminate many job programs; the Senate Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee reported S. 1356, which would leave the programs largely intact. Senate HELP Committee Chairman Tom Harkin (D-IA) has been working with Ranking Member Lamar Alexander (R-TN) on a possible compromise.

**Highway Funding:** The Highway Trust Fund is expected to run out of money this summer. Without action, reimbursements to the states will slow, as will the highway projects they fund and the jobs they create. Lawmakers must also decide what to do with the programs when the current transportation authorization expires at the end of September. Inaction is not an option because at least a short-term extension is needed to prevent furloughs. Financing the programs is the main issue; the gas tax doesn't provide enough revenue and there's no agreement on alternatives that would raise significant amounts of money. Transfers from the general fund to the Highway Trust Fund are opposed by many Republicans.

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**Week in Review**

**EPA and Army Corps Propose New Clean Water Act Rule**

On April 21, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) jointly released a new proposed rule - **Definition of Waters of the U.S. Under the Clean Water Act** - that would amend the definition of "waters of the U.S." and potentially expand the range of waters that fall under federal jurisdiction. The proposed rule, published in the Federal Register, is open for public comment for 90 days, until July 21, 2014. [Click here](#) for TFG’s Report on this issue.

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**Congressional Schedule**

**Monday, April 28**

- House Transportation and Infrastructure Full Committee hearing on "Federal Regulation of Waters: Impacts of Administration Overreach on Local Economies and Job Creation."

**Tuesday, April 29**

- House Natural Resources Committee Full Committee hearing on "American Energy Jobs: Opportunities for Skilled Trades Workers."
- House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee hearing on "A Review of Recent United States Army Corps of Engineers Chiefs Reports and Post Authorization Change Reports."
- House Agriculture Committee's Horticulture, Research, Biotechnology, and Foreign Agriculture Subcommittee hearing to review current research and application of management strategies to control pests and diseases of pollinators.
- House Energy and Commerce Full Committee markup of H.R. 6, "the Domestic

**Wednesday, April 30**

- House Transportation and Infrastructure’s Aviation Subcommittee hearing on “Air Service to Small and Rural Communities.”
- Senate Appropriation’s Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing to examine the proposed FY 2015 Forest Service budget.
- Senate Appropriations Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies hearing to examine FY 2015 budget estimates for the Department of Education.
- Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Full Committee hearing to examine the Transportation Security Administration, focusing on confronting America’s transportation security challenges.

**Thursday, May 1**

- Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry’s Jobs, Rural Economic Growth, and Energy Innovation Subcommittee hearing to examine the importance of regional strategies in rural economic development.
- Senate Energy and Natural Resources Full Committee hearing entitled “Short on Gas: A Look into the Propane Shortages this Winter.”