Congressional Outlook

Week of February 10th

The House and Senate are in session this week, and much of the focus will be centered around finding consensus on raising the debt ceiling.

The Senate is scheduled to vote today on a motion to proceed on S. 1963, which would repeal a cut in cost-of-living adjustments for working-age military retirees. The change was part of the budget agreement signed by the president in December. Also today, the House will consider the reauthorization of the National Integrated Drought Information System, H.R. 2431. The measure would authorize $13.5 million a year through fiscal year 2018, and would require the system to incorporate an early warning system for drought conditions.

Week in Review

President Obama Signs Five Year Farm Bill Into Law

On Friday, President Obama signed the $956 billion farm bill into law at Michigan State University. The measure was passed in Congress after four years of wrangling over farm subsidies and the food stamp program.

Debt Limit Debate Continues

The temporary suspension of the nation's borrowing limit expired on Friday, as lawmakers continue to seek consensus on a strategy to raise the debt ceiling and the Treasury Department begins "extraordinary measures" to avoid default. Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew continues to advise that even with these measures, the government stands to run out of cash by the end of February. House Republicans are discussing whether to send President Barack Obama a clean bill or attach spending cuts or policy changes.
Unemployment Insurance Legislation Stalls in Senate

A bill that would have extended unemployment benefits for three months fell one vote short of advancing last Thursday, as four Republicans joined Democrats and independents in support of a cloture motion to advance the bill.

Max Baucus Confirmed as Ambassador to China

The Senate unanimously approved the nomination of the Montana Democratic senator to be the next Ambassador to China last Thursday, creating a vacancy atop the Finance Committee. This leaves the prospects for major tax reform in limbo.

President Obama Launches "Made In Rural America" Initiative

During the signing of the farm bill last Friday, the President also announced a new initiative, "Made in Rural America," to help rural businesses boost exports. The plan would use federal resources to help rural businesses access export and investment opportunities.

Congressional Hearing Schedule

Monday, February 10th
- House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee field hearing on "The Charleston, West Virginia Chemical Spill," focusing on the circumstances behind, and the response to, the accidental release of chemicals into the Elk River by Freedom Industries, Inc.
- House Energy and Commerce Committee's Health Subcommittee hearing on "Examining Drug Shortages and Recent Efforts to Address Them."
- Senate Armed Services Committee markup of S.1856, to repeal section 403 of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013, relating to an annual adjustment of retired pay for members of the Armed Forces under the age of 62.

Tuesday, February 11th
- House Education and the Workforce Committee's Higher Education and Workforce Training Subcommittee hearing on "Serving Seniors Through the Older Americans Act."
- House Energy and Commerce Committee's Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee hearing on "Department of Energy Oversight: Status of Clean Coal Programs."
- House Science, Space, and Technology Committee's Environment Subcommittee hearing on "Ensuring Open Science at EPA."
- House Ways and Means Committee markup of H.R.3865, the "Stop Targeting of Political Beliefs by the IRS Act of 2014," to prohibit the Internal Revenue Service from modifying the standard for determining whether an organization is operated exclusively for the promotion of social welfare for purposes of section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

Wednesday, February 12th
- Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee hearing on "Extreme Weather Events: The Costs of Not Being Prepared."
- Senate Environment and Public Works Committee hearing on "MAP-21 (Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act) Reauthorization: The Economic Importance of Maintaining Federal Investments in"
our Transportation Infrastructure."

- Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee's Energy Subcommittee hearing on "Lessons from State Efficiency and Renewable Programs."
- Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on "Fisheries Treaties and Port State Measures Agreements."

**Thursday, February 13th**

- Senate Judiciary Committee markup of S.1675, the "Recidivism Reduction and Public Safety Act of 2013"; and S.149, the "STOP (Stopping Tax Offenders and Prosecuting) Identity Theft Act of 2013."
- Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee hearing on "Enhancing our Rail Safety: Current Challenges for Passenger and Freight Rail."