Weekly Legislative Update
January 27, 2014

Congressional Outlook

Week of January 27th

The Senate returns Monday at 2 p.m. to pick up work on S.1926, a bill to delay part of the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012. The bill would postpone rate increases for properties remapped into higher risk areas. It also would reinstate subsidies for certain primary residences until the Federal Emergency Management Agency meets affordability requirements and ensures its flood mapping is credible, which could take up to four years.

The House of Representatives also returns and will prep legislation to block federal funding from covering abortion, H.R.7, “No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Act.”

Both House and Senate negotiators on farm policy legislation, H.R.2642, are expected to release a final bill that could be voted on in the House as early as Wednesday before House GOP leaders leave town for a three-day retreat. At their annual retreat, Members plan to discuss, among other issues, positioning on the debt ceiling debate, tax reform, and immigration.

Finally, on Tuesday at 9:00 p.m. EST, President Obama will deliver his State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress. The Administration is already being criticized for looking at executive orders as a way to achieve goals that cannot get through a divided Congress. The number four House Republican leader, Conference Chairwoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers, will give the official Republican response to the President's address.

Week in Review

Federal Government Funded Through September 30, 2014

On January 17, President Obama signed into law the omnibus spending package providing $1.012 trillion in discretionary federal funds through the end of federal fiscal year 2014. Passage
of the 12-bill package headed off any threat of another government shutdown, and clears the way for lawmakers to focus on the next potential fiscal showdown - raising the federal debt ceiling. Treasury Secretary Jack Lew said that Congress should act as soon as possible to raise the borrowing cap at least by late February.

Administration Touts Sign Ups as Opinion Polls Show Doubt

On Friday, the White House announced 3 million people secured coverage through a mix of HealthCare.gov sign ups and enrollment in expanded Medicaid programs. While this number was admittedly smaller than the levels they said were necessary to remain on track for the major March deadline, Health and Human Services officials boasted that it was impressive given the website problems that plagued the initial roll out. Roughly 800,000 people signed up on federal (and state-run) health exchanges since right before Christmas. Published estimates suggest that approximately 25% of new enrollees have been adults under 35. That number is less than what actuaries and officials say is necessary to create a system-wide balance between healthy young people and adults with a host of health care needs.

Target Leads Private Sector Insurance Withdrawal

Target Corporation, the nation's second largest retailer, announced that it would no longer offer insurance coverage for many of its part-time employees. It cited expanded health insurance options under the Affordable Care Act as the primary reason, saying that its employees would have access to better coverage under the health exchanges than what the company currently offers. When the transition is complete, Target will be the largest employer to make such a move, prompting widespread speculation that more Fortune 500 companies and other employers will do the same. In 2015, the Affordable Care Act will require companies with more than 50 employees to offer health insurance coverage to workers who work more than 30 hours a week.

Congressional Hearing Schedule

**Monday, January 27**

- House Rules Committee meeting to formulate a rule on H.R.7, the "No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion Act."
- House Energy and Commerce Committee markup of H.R.3826, the "Electricity Security and Affordability Act" and H.R.2126, the "Better Buildings Act." (also on Tuesday's schedule).

**Tuesday, January 28**

- House Veterans' Affairs Committee hearing on "What can the Federal Government Learn from the Private Sector's Successful Approach to Hiring Veterans?"
- House Education and the Workforce Committee's Higher Education and Workforce Training Subcommittee hearing on "Keeping College Within Reach: Sharing Best Practices for Serving Low-income and First Generation Students."
- House Ways and Means Committee hearing on "Impact of the Employer Mandate's Definition of Full-time Employee on Jobs and Opportunities."
• House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's Highways and Transit Subcommittee hearing on "Improving the Effectiveness of the Federal Surface Transportation Safety Grant Programs."
• House Budget Committee hearing on "A Progress Report on the War on Poverty: Expanding Economic Opportunity."
• Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on recent changes to the U.S. military retirement system.

**Wednesday, January 29**

• Senate Rules and Administration Committee hearing on S.1728, the "Safeguarding Elections for our Nation's Troops through Reforms and Improvements (SENTRI) Act."
• Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on oversight of the Justice Department and reform of government surveillance programs.
• Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee markup of S.1486, the "Postal Reform Act of 2013."

**Thursday, January 30**

• Senate Judiciary Committee markup of S.619, the "Justice Safety Valve Act of 2013"; S.1410, the "Smarter Sentencing Act of 2013"; and S.1675, the "Recidivism Reduction and Public Safety Act of 2013."