Weekly Legislative Update
Week of March 10, 2014

Congressional Outlook

We apologize for the delayed update. We experienced technical difficulties yesterday.

Week of March 10th

The President's Fiscal Year 2015 Budget, released last week, and developing events in Ukraine and Russia will drive much of the activity on Capitol Hill this week. Cabinet secretaries and other top administration officials will appear before congressional committees to discuss details of the President's $3.9 trillion budget request. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee tomorrow will consider an economic aid package, including loan guarantees, for Ukraine. That legislation also could include authorization for sanctions against Russia. Senate leaders plan to schedule floor action on the bill later in the week.

Yesterday, the Senate unanimously passed a measure that would retain the military chain of command in prosecuting sexual-assault cases while making changes to how those cases are handled. Later in the week, the chamber is set to consider a bill that would reauthorize a child-care block grant program.

The House agenda includes a measure that would end the need to pass so-called "doc fix" legislation by adopting a permanent solution on payments to Medicare physicians. Another bill would allow Congress to take legal action against the executive branch for failing to faithfully follow the law, such as deadlines set under the 2010 health-care legislation. On Wednesday, the House Judiciary Committee will hold a hearing on exploring alternatives to collecting taxes on Internet sales, a priority for state and local governments across the country.

Week in Review
President Obama Releases FY 2015 Budget

Last Tuesday, the White House released the President's FY 2015 budget. The Administration estimates the budget would yield a $564 deficit for the fiscal year. For more details on the budget proposal, click here.

More Changes to Affordable Care Act Enforcement

The Administration released a host of final regulations that, among other things, ease reporting requirements for businesses and allow insurers to keep selling individual policies that do not meet the ACA’s requirements. Officials said the two-year extension should prevent a mass cancellation of policies, a prospect that could have harmed Democratic candidates this November.

House Passes Flood Insurance Bill

In a strong show of bipartisanship, the House of Representatives passed an amended H.R.3370, the Homeowners Flood Insurance Affordability Act of 2014, by a vote of 306-91 on March 4. The bill now heads to the Senate, where it is unclear what the next steps will be. The chamber is, however, expected to consider the legislation very soon. The Senate passed its version of the Homeowners Flood Insurance Affordability Act in late January.

Landrieu, Pryor Introduce ESA Reform Legislation

Democratic Senators Mary Landrieu (D-LA) and Mark Pryor (D-AR) introduced a bill to reform the Endangered Species Act. For more, click here.

NRCS Changes in Preparation for Farm Bill

According to USDA Natural Resources Conservation (NRCS) Chief Jason Weller, the agency is aiming to get its revamped conservation programs up and running this spring and to start using them to put conservation practices on the ground in farm country this summer in alignment with the new farm bill. For more, click here.

Congressional Schedule

Tuesday, March 11

- House Small Business Committee's Contracting and Workforce Subcommittee field hearing on "Underserved Small Businesses: Providing Access to Federal Programs."
- House Rules Committee Meeting to formulate a rule on H.R.3973, the "Faithful Execution of the Law Act of 2014"; and H.R.4138, the "Executive Needs to Faithfully Observe and Respect Congressional Enactments (ENFORCE) the Law Act of 2014."
- Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on "Open Government and Freedom of Information: Reinvigorating the Freedom of Information Act for the Digital Age."
• Senate Appropriations Committee's Legislative Branch Subcommittee hearing on the FY2015 budget for the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) and the Government Accountability Office (GAO).
• Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee's Efficiency and Effectiveness of Federal Programs and the Federal Workforce Subcommittee hearing on "A More Efficient And Effective Government: Improving the Regulatory Framework."
• Senate Rules and Administration Committee hearing on "Election Administration: Innovation, Administrative Improvements and Cost Savings."
• Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee's Housing, Transportation, and Community Development Subcommittee hearing on "Superstorm Sandy Recovery: Ensuring Strong Coordination among Federal, State, and Local Stakeholders."

Wednesday, March 12
• House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's Highways and Transit Subcommittee hearing on "Oversight of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Implementation of MAP-21 and FY 2015 Budget Request for Surface Transportation."
• House Appropriations Committee's Homeland Security Subcommittee hearing on "The FY 2015 Coast Guard Budget."
• House Ways and Means Committee hearing on "The President's FY 2015 Budget Proposal for the Department of Health and Human Services."
• House Oversight and Government Reform Committee markup of the "Government Reports Elimination Act"; the "Federal Register Modernization Act"; H.R.1078, to make participation in the American Community Survey voluntary, except with respect to certain basic questions; H.R.3635, the "Safe and Secure Federal Websites Act of 2013"; and legislation to amend title 5, United States Code, to modify the default Thrift Savings Plan investment fund.
• House Education and the Workforce Committee hearing on "Raising the Bar: The Role of Charter Schools in K-12 Education."
• House Judiciary Committee hearing on "Exploring Alternative Solutions on the Internet Sales Tax Issue."
• House Energy and Commerce Committee's Communications and Technology Subcommittee hearing on "Reauthorization of the Satellite Television Extension and Localism Act."
• House Appropriations Committee's Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on "FY2015 Installations, Environment, Energy and BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure) Budget and Oversight."
• House Budget Committee hearing on "The President's FY2015 Revenue and Economic Policy Proposals."
• House Appropriations Committee's Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on "The FY2015 Department of Transportation Budget."
• House Education and the Workforce Committee's Higher Education and Workforce Training Subcommittee hearing on "Examining the Mismanagement of the Student Loan Rehabilitation Process."
• Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee's Economic Policy Subcommittee hearing on "The State of U.S. Retirement Security: Can the Middle Class Afford to
Thursday, March 13

- House Judiciary Committee's Courts, Intellectual Property and the Internet Subcommittee hearing on "Section 512 of Title 17," limitations on liability relating to material online.
- House Veterans' Affairs Committee hearing on "U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Budget Request for FY 2015."
- House Appropriations Committee's Defense Subcommittee hearing on "The FY 2015 Department of Defense Budget."
- House Agriculture Committee markup of the Budget Views and Estimates Letter of the Committee on Agriculture for the agencies and programs under jurisdiction of the Committee for FY 2015; H.R.935, the "Reducing Regulatory Burdens Act of 2013"; H.Con.Res.86, Celebrating the 100th anniversary of the enactment of the Smith-Lever Act, which established the nationwide Cooperative Extension System.
- House Appropriations Committee's Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on "The FY 2015 Department of Health and Human Services Budget."
- House Oversight and Government Reform Committee's Federal Workforce, U.S. Postal Service, and the Census Subcommittee hearing on "At a Crossroads: the Postal Service's $100 Billion in Unfunded Liabilities."
- House Appropriations Committee's Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on "The FY 2015 Department of Housing and Urban Development Budget."
- Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee hearing on "The Homeland Security Department's Budget Submission for FY 2015."
- Senate Appropriations Committee's Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on "The FY 2015 Budget Request for the Department of Transportation."
- Senate Finance Committee hearing on "Innovative Ideas to Strengthen and Expand the Middle Class."

Friday, March 14

- House Appropriations Committee's Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on "The FY2015 Department of Agriculture Budget."