Congressional Outlook

Week of March 24th

The House and Senate are back in session this week after a week-long district work period, and there will be significant focus on economic aid to Ukraine and sanctions against Russia.

The House Appropriations Committee will continue subcommittee hearings on fiscal year 2015 budget requests. The House will also consider a measure that would implement a 2008 rule issued by the Bush Administration that allows companies to put the waste from mountaintop removal into nearby streams and valleys. The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee will hear ideas from a roundtable of experts on how to address expensive water quality challenges, including rehabilitating and replacing aging water and wastewater infrastructure. Needed investment is estimated at $4.8 trillion over the next two decades, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) calculates that drinking water infrastructure alone requires $384 billion in improvements over the next 20 years. The Committee will hear about potential solutions such as public-private partnerships, including privatization of sewer and water systems, and new public funding sources through the creation of federal programs such as the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) currently in the Senate passed Water Resources Development Act (WRDA).

The Senate is expected to consider legislation that would restore federal long-term unemployment benefits for an additional three months, and also will consider a bill that would permanently replace the Medicare Sustainable Growth Rate formula, enacted in 1997 (also known as the "doc fix.").

Week in Review

EPA "In Flux" on Timing of CWA Jurisdiction Study
The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) seems to be reconsidering when they will release their proposed rule and related waters’ connectivity study that will clarify federal jurisdiction over isolated waters and other waters deemed to be "connected" to navigable waters under the Clean Water Act (CWA).

The agency has been criticized for planning to release the proposed rule in advance of the completion of the connectivity study the rule would be based upon. Should the Obama Administration delay the rulemaking, which is being conducted jointly by EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers, it could defer the controversial issue until after the 2014 election and potentially remove it as an issue that Democratic candidates would have to defend in a host of Republican-leaning states where it is already provoking strong opposition. But any delay could also leave the administration with little time to complete and implement the rulemaking, and deal with almost certain litigation, before the end of President Obama's term.

President Signs Flood Insurance Bill Into Law

Last Friday, President Obama signed H.R. 3370, the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act, into law. The President's signature completes a nearly 2-year effort to combat unaffordable premium increases resulting from Biggert-Waters 2012.

Congressional Schedule

Monday, March 24

- House Energy and Commerce Committee's Communications and Technology Subcommittee markup of legislation to reauthorize the "Satellite Television Extension and Localism Act."

Tuesday, March 25

- House Appropriations Committee's Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on FY2015 appropriations for agencies under its jurisdiction.
- House Education and the Workforce Committee's Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education Subcommittee hearing on "The Foundation for Success: Strengthening the Child Care and Development Block Grant Program."
- House Appropriations Committee's Homeland Security Subcommittee hearing on "FY2015 Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Budget."
- House Appropriations Committee's Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on "FY2015 Budget Hearing USDA Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services."
- House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee meeting on "Roundtable: Overview of Public-Private Partnerships for Water Supply and Treatment."
- House Financial Services Committee hearing on "Why Debt Matters."
- House Energy and Commerce Committee's Communications and Technology Subcommittee markup of legislation to reauthorize the “Satellite Television Extension and Localism Act.”
- House Small Business Committee markup of the views and estimates of the FY2015 budget request of the Small Business Administration.
- House Appropriations Committee's Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on "FY2015 Budget - Department of the Interior."
- House Natural Resources Committee's Public Lands and Environmental Regulation Subcommittee hearing on H.R.863, the "Commission to Study the Potential Creation of a National Women's History Museum Act of 2013"; H.R.3006, to authorize a land exchange involving the acquisition of private land adjacent to the Cibola National Wildlife Refuge in Arizona for inclusion in the refuge in exchange for certain Bureau of Land Management lands in Riverside County, California; H.R.4017, to designate a peak located in Nevada as "Mount Reagan"; H.R.4120, to amend the National Law Enforcement Museum Act to extend the termination date; H.R.4253, to permanently withdraw, reserve, and transfer Bureau of Land Management lands used for military purposes in Alaska, Nevada, and New Mexico to the appropriate Secretary of the military department concerned.
- House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee hearing on "The Role of Water Quality Trading in Achieving Clean Water Objectives."
- House Rules Committee meeting to formulate a rule on H.R.1459, the “Ensuring Public Involvement in the Creation of National Monuments Act.”
- Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee hearing on "Importing Energy, Exporting Jobs. Can it be Reversed?"
- Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee hearing on "Teacher Preparation: Ensuring a Quality Teacher in Every Classroom."
- Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee’s Emergency Management, Intergovernmental Relations, and the District of Columbia Subcommittee hearing on “Transparency and Training: Preparing our First Responders for Emerging Threats and Hazards.”

**Wednesday, March 26**

- House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee hearing on "The President's FY2015 Budget Request for Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Programs."
- House Oversight and Government Reform Committee hearing on "Examining the IRS Response to the Targeting Scandal."
- House Natural Resources Committee hearing on "Collision Course: Oversight of the Obama Administration's Enforcement Approach for America's Wildlife Laws and Its Impact on Domestic Energy."
- House Appropriations Committee's Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on "FY2015 Budget Hearing USDA (Agriculture Department) Research, Education and Economics."
- House Appropriations Committee's Homeland Security Subcommittee hearing on
"FY2015 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Budget."

- House Appropriations Committee's Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on "The Future of Biomedical Research."
- House Agriculture Committee's Conservation, Energy, and Forestry Subcommittee hearing on a review the impacts of Endangered Species Act and related litigation on National Forest System management.
- House Education and the Workforce Committee hearing on "Reviewing the President's FY2015 Budget Proposal for the Department of Labor."
- House Small Business Committee's Contracting and Workforce Subcommittee hearing on "Barriers to Opportunity: Do Occupational Licensing Laws Unfairly Limit Entrepreneurship and Jobs?"
- House Judiciary Committee's Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security and Investigations Subcommittee hearing on "Innocence for Sale: Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking."
- House Energy and Commerce Committee's Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee hearing on "Where Have All the Patients Gone? Examining the Psychiatric Bed Shortage."
- House Appropriations Committee's Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on "Budget Hearing - Bureau of Reclamation."
- House Homeland Security Committee's Oversight and Management Efficiency Subcommittee markup of H.R.4228, the "DHS Acquisition Accountability and Efficiency Act."
- House Veterans' Affairs Committee's Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs Subcommittee hearing on H.R.2018, the "Honor Those Who Served Act of 2013"; H.R.2088, direct the secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program to establish claims adjudication centers of excellence; H.R.2119, the "Veterans Access to Speedy Review Act"; H.R.2529, the "Veteran Spouses Equal Treatment Act"; H.R.3671, to expand the eligibility for a medallion furnished by the secretary of Veterans Affairs to signify the veteran status of a deceased individual; H.R.3876, the "Burial with Dignity for Heroes Act of 2014"; H.R.4095, the "Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2014"; H.R.4102, to clarify that the estate of a deceased veteran may receive certain accrued benefits upon the death of the veteran; H.R.4141, to authorize the secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into enhanced-use leases for excess property of the National Cemetery Administration that is unsuitable for burial purposes; and H.R.4191, to improve the treatment of medical evidence provided by non-Department of Veterans Affairs medical professionals in support of claims for disability compensation under the laws administered by the secretary of Veterans Affairs.
- Senate Appropriations Committee's Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on "FY2015 Budget Request for the Department of the Interior."
- Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on "Reauthorization of the Satellite Television Extension and Localism Act."
- Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee hearing on "Strengthening Public-Private Partnerships to Reduce Cyber Risks to Our Nation's Critical Infrastructure."
- Senate Environment and Public Works Committee hearing on "Oversight Hearing on the Environmental Protection Agency's FY2015 Budget."
- Senate Appropriations Committee's Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on "Review the FY2015 Budget request for the Department of Agriculture."
- Senate (Special Committee on) Aging hearing on "Preventing Medicare Fraud: How Can We Best Protect Seniors and Taxpayers?"
- Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee hearing on "Protecting
Personal Consumer Information from Cyber Attacks and Data Breaches.

**Thursday, March 27**

- House Judiciary Committee meeting on “Over-Criminalization Task Force: Over-Federalization.”
- House Appropriations Committee Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on "FY2015 Budget - Environment Protection Agency (EPA)."
- House Appropriations Committee’s Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on "FY2015 Budget Hearing Food and Drug Administration (FDA)."
- Senate Environment and Public Works Committee hearing on "MAP-21 Reauthorization: State and Local Perspectives on Transportation Priorities and Funding."
- Senate Judiciary Committee markup of S.1720, the “Patent Transparency and Improvements Act of 2013.”
- Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee hearing on “Strengthening the Federal Student Loan Program for Borrowers.”
- Senate Appropriations Committee’s Financial Services and General Government Subcommittee hearing on “Review of the President's FY2015 funding request and budget justification for the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).”