Weekly Legislative Update
Week of March 31, 2014

Congressional Outlook

Week of March 31st

The House and Senate are in session this week. The Senate is set to take action Monday on the House-passed (in a controversial voice vote) one-year measure to prevent a massive cut to doctors’ Medicare payments ("doc fix"). The Senate Finance Committee as early as Monday could unveil legislation to renew many of the 55 tax breaks for businesses and individuals that expired at the end of 2013. A markup of the bill later in the week could offer some debate regarding the more controversial items. Action on a final deal with the House is unlikely until after the November elections.

Appropriators continue to hear from top administration officials on their budget requests, with Attorney General Eric Holder, Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan, Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James, National Institutes of Health Director Francis Collins, and Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Margaret Hamburg all scheduled to testify.

House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan (R-WI) plans to release a budget blueprint for FY 2015 this week. The plan is said to abide by the $1.014 trillion discretionary spending limit (including the $521 billion defense and $492 billion nondefense caps) agreed to in the two-year budget agreement Ryan negotiated with Senate Budget Chairwoman Patty Murray (D-WA) last year. This fact should allow for FY 2015 appropriations work to continue moving forward this spring, although there has been much focus lately on specific policy differences between the Obama Administration and the Congress (from both Republicans and Democrats in some cases) during the ongoing appropriations oversight hearings on key agency programs in the President's FY 2015 budget request. If these policy disagreements continue to worsen, passage of FY 2015 spending bills prior to October 1, 2014 (the beginning of the fiscal year) will be made even more difficult. Senate Democrats are not planning to release a budget framework because the $1.014 trillion spending cap already agreed upon makes a new blueprint unnecessary.

Week in Review
EPA Releases CWA Jurisdiction Rulemaking Proposal, Expands Agriculture Waivers

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) last week released their long-awaited proposed rule aimed at clarifying the reach of the Clean Water Act (CWA) over some wetlands and other smaller waters as "waters of the U.S.". At the same time, in an effort to address concerns from the agriculture community, the agencies have also unveiled a new interpretative rule, to take effect immediately that creates a process to exempt as many as 53 agricultural conservation practices (e.g. habitat restoration and "normal farming" activities) from CWA permit requirements. For more, [click here](#).

Supreme Court Denies Review of Broadened EPA Permit Veto Powers

The Supreme Court has let stand a lower court ruling that granted EPA broad authority to veto projects permitted by the Army Corps of Engineers "whenever" the agency finds harm would occur. For more, [click here](#).

State and Local Officials Stress Need for Trust Fund Fix

On March 27, seven state and local leaders representing Indiana, Vermont, Delaware, Louisiana, Wyoming, Oklahoma, and Rhode Island appeared before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee warning of dire consequences to transportation projects in their states if Congress does not act to shore up the beleaguered Highway Trust Fund, which has been predicted to run critically low on cash as early as July 2014. Indeed, some panelists testified that projects are already being delaying because of the threat of the fund's insolvency and, if Congress does not act, many projects will be cancelled. For more, [click here](#).

ACA Exchanges See Record Volume Ahead of Today's Enrollment Deadline

The administration says HealthCare.gov saw two million site visits this weekend, while the call centers received 380,000 phone calls, ahead of the March 31 deadline.

Congressional Schedule

Monday, March 31

- Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee hearing on "Management Matters: Creating a 21st Century Government - Part II, Outside Views."

Tuesday, April 1

- United States House of Representatives meets to consider legislation considered under suspension of the rules: Concur in the Senate Amendment to H.R.4152, to provide for the costs of loan guarantees for Ukraine; S.2183, the "United States International Programming to Ukraine and Neighboring Regions"; H.R.2413, the "Weather Forecasting Improvement Act of 2014," as amended; H.R.4005, the "Coast Guard and Maritime
Transportation Act of 2014,” as amended; H.Con.Res.92, to authorize the use of the Capitol Grounds for the National Peace Officers Memorial Service and the National Honor Guard and Pipe Band Exhibition; H.Con.Res.88, to authorize the use of the Capitol Grounds for the Greater Washington Soap Box Derby; and S.1557, the “Children's Hospital GME Support Reauthorization Act of 2013.”

- House Energy and Commerce Committee hearing on “The GM Ignition Switch Recall: Why Did It Take So Long?”
- House Energy and Commerce Committee's Health Subcommittee hearing on "Examining Concerns Regarding FDA's (Food and Drug Administration) Proposed Changes to Generic Drug Labeling."
- House Rules Committee meets to formulate a rule on H.R.2575, the “Save American Workers Act of 2014,” to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to repeal the 30-hour threshold for classification as a full-time employee for purposes of the employer mandate in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and replace it with 40 hours.
- Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee's Investigations Subcommittee hearing on "Caterpillar's Offshore Tax Strategy," focusing on methods employed by multinational corporations to allocate income outside of the United States and how such activities are affected by the Internal Revenue Code and related regulations.
- Senate Budget Committee hearing on "Opportunity and Mobility in Today's Economy."
- Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee's Communications, Technology, and the Internet Subcommittee hearing on "Reauthorization of the Satellite Television Extension and Localism Act."
- Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee hearing on "Access to Justice: Ensuring Equal Pay with the Paycheck Fairness Act."

Wednesday, April 2

- House Appropriations Committee's Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on "FY 2015 Budget Hearing - United States Forest Service."
- House Oversight and Government Reform Committee hearing on "Undercover Storefront Operations: Continued Oversight of ATF's Reckless Investigative Techniques."
- House Appropriations Committee's Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on "FY 2015 Budget Hearing - USDA Marketing and Regulatory Programs."
- House Education and the Workforce Committee hearing on "Keeping College within Reach: Meeting the Needs of Contemporary Students."
• House Financial Services Committee's Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee hearing on allegations of discrimination and retaliation against Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) employees.
• House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee hearing on "The President's FY2015 Budget: Administration Priorities for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers."
• House Appropriations Committee's Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on "FY 2015 Budget Hearing - Department of Labor."
• House Administration Committee hearing on "The National Zoo of Today and Tomorrow - an Innovative Center Focused on the Care and Conservation of the World's Species."
• House Energy and Commerce Committee's Communications and Technology Subcommittee hearing on "Ensuring the Security, Stability, Resilience, and Freedom of the Global Internet."
• House Small Business Committee hearing on "Bitcoin: Examining the Benefits and Risks for Small Business."
• House Appropriations Committee's Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on "Oversight Hearing - Public Housing."
• House Judiciary Committee's Courts, Intellectual Property and the Internet Subcommittee hearing on "Preservation and Reuse of Copyrighted Works."
• House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials Subcommittee hearing on "Examining Issues for Hazardous Materials Reauthorization."
• House Ways and Means Committee's Human Resources Subcommittee hearing on the Federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program.
• Senate Armed Services Committee's Readiness and Management Support Subcommittee hearing on military construction, environmental, energy, and base closure programs in review of the Defense Authorization Request for FY2015 and the Future Years Defense Program.
• Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee hearing on "Data Breach on the Rise: Protecting Personal Information From Harm."
• Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee's Consumer Protection, Product Safety, and Insurance Subcommittee hearing on "Examining the GM Recall and NHTSA's Defect Investigation Process."
• Senate Appropriations Committee's Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on proposed budget estimates for FY2015 for the Housing and Urban Development Department.
• Senate Appropriations Committee's Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on the FY2015 budget request for the National Institutes of Health (NIH).
• Senate Appropriations Committee's Financial Services and General Government Subcommittee hearing on proposed budget estimates and justification for FY2015 for the Department of the Treasury's Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence and its administration and enforcement of sanctions.
• Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee hearing on "The FY2015 Budget Request for the Small Business Administration."
• Senate Appropriations Committee's Energy and Water Development Subcommittee hearing on proposed budget estimates and justification for FY2015 for the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the Interior Department.
Thursday, April 3

- House Appropriations Committee's Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on "FY2015 Budget Hearing - USDA Food Safety."
- House Appropriations Committee's Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on "FY2015 Budget Hearing - National Park Service."
- House Agriculture Committee hearing on "Review of the State of the Rural Economy."
- House Ways and Means Committee hearing on "President Obama's Trade Policy Agenda."
- House Natural Resources Committee hearing on "Department of the Interior Spending and the President's FY2015 Budget Proposal."
- House Appropriations Committee's Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on "Oversight Hearing - Department of Transportation Modes."
- House Oversight and Government Reform Committee's Economic Growth, Job Creation, and Regulatory Affairs Subcommittee and Energy Policy, Health Care, and Entitlements Subcommittee joint hearing on "Examining ObamaCare's Problem-Filled State Exchanges."
- House Energy and Commerce Committee's Health Subcommittee hearing on H.R.3717, the "Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act."
- House Natural Resources Committee's Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs Subcommittee hearing on H.R.69, the "Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing Enforcement Act of 2013"; H.R.2646, the "REFI (Revitalizing the Economy of Fisheries in) Pacific Act"; and the "Pirate Fishing Elimination Act."
- Senate Appropriations Committee's Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on the proposed budget estimates for FY 2015 for the Food and Drug Administration.
- Senate Judiciary Committee markup of S.1720, the "Patent Transparency and Improvements Act of 2013."
- Senate Appropriations Committee's Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on the proposed budget estimates for FY 2015 for the Justice Department.

Friday, April 4

- House Natural Resources Committee's Public Lands and Environmental Regulation Subcommittee hearing on legislation to amend the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act to improve consistency and accountability in the collection and expenditure of Federal recreation fees; H.R.2743, the "Veterans Eagle Parks Pass Act"; and H.R.3976, the "Wounded Veterans Recreation Act."
- House Appropriations Committee's Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Subcommittee hearing on "The Department of Justice FY 2015 Budget Request."
- House Natural Resources Committee's Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee hearing on "Energy Independence: Domestic Opportunities to Reverse California's Growing Dependence on Foreign Oil."
- House Appropriations Committee's Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on "FY 2015 Budget Hearing - USDA Rural Development."