Congressional Outlook

Week of May 12th

The Senate is in session this week, while the House is in recess and will return next week. Senate Democrats scheduled a cloture* vote for later today on energy-efficiency legislation. If the bill fails to move forward, that would kill a deal to also take up a standalone measure that would authorize the Keystone XL oil pipeline. Next on the Senate agenda is legislation that would revive more than 50 lapsed tax breaks. A cloture vote is scheduled for early in the week on a motion to proceed to that measure. The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee plans to mark up a six-year surface-transportation reauthorization bill on Thursday. The bill text is expected to be released today.

*Cloture: The only procedure by which the Senate can vote to place a time limit on consideration of a bill or other matter, and thereby overcome a filibuster. Under the cloture rule, the Senate may limit consideration of a pending matter to 30 additional hours, but only by vote of three-fifths of the full Senate, normally 60 votes.

Week in Review

Another Successful NATaT Fly-In

Last week, leaders from NATaT member states joined NATaT staff on Capitol Hill to advocate for the organization's federal priorities. Town and township officials met with Members of Congress and staff to secure support for priority legislation and warn them about the potential detriment of changes to the Clean Water Act. Cosponsors were secured, our message was heard, and we all enjoyed seeing each other. Thank you to all who participated to make this annual event a success.
Research and Development Tax Credit Made Permanent in House-Passed Bill

On Friday, the House passed, H.R. 4438 that makes permanent a tax credit for research and development. The bill passed with a 274-131 vote. The administration "strongly opposes" the bill and the president’s advisers would recommend a veto, according to a statement of administration policy released May 6 by the White House Office of Management and Budget. The White House said in the statement that it supports a permanent research credit, but the objection to the bill stems from its lack of offsets. The Senate Finance Committee on April 3 approved a broader bill, S. 2260 that would extend the research credit for two years along with most other expired or expiring tax provisions.

House Appropriations Subcommittee Approves FY 2015 Transportation, HUD Spending Bill

Last week, the House Appropriations Transportation, HUD (THUD) subcommittee approved its draft FY 2015 spending bill that would keep highway, aviation, and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) spending level, but apply cuts for rail, transit and other transportation and community development grant programs. All told, the bill would provide $52 billion in discretionary spending for infrastructure and housing programs, a $1.2 billion increase from FY 2014 but $7.8 billion below President Obama’s budget request. The bill includes $3 billion for HUD’s popular CDBG program and $700 million for the HOME Investment Partnerships program, $300 million less than in FY 2014. For more, click here.

House Passes Charter School Bill

The House passed H.R. 10 on Friday with a 360-45 vote. This measure authorizes $300 million per year for fiscal years 2015 through 2020 for charter schools, including grants to states to support educational quality initiatives.

White House Releases National Climate Assessment

Last week, the Obama administration released its National Climate Assessment, citing recent bouts of severe weather to bolster its contention that global warming is already affecting Americans.

House Votes to Hold IRS Official in Contempt

The House voted 231-187 on Wednesday to hold former IRS official Lois Lerner in contempt, and separately, voted 250-168 in favor of a resolution urging Attorney General Eric Holder to appoint a special counsel in the matter.

Congressional Schedule

Tuesday, May 13

- House Small Business Committee Subcommittee on Health and Technology field hearing in New York on "Room to Grow: The Benefits of Partnerships in Small Agriculture Business Development."
• Senate Energy and Natural Resources Full Committee hearing to examine the nominations of Suzette M. Kimball, of West Virginia, to be Director of the United States Geological Survey, and Estevan R. Lopez, of New Mexico, to be Commissioner of Reclamation, both of the Department of the Interior, and Monica C. Regalbuto, of Illinois, to be Assistant Secretary of Energy for Environmental Management.
• Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Subcommittee on Water and Wildlife hearing to examine polluted transportation infrastructure stormwater runoff.

**Wednesday, May 14**

• House Natural Resources Full Committee field hearing on "Protecting the Rights of Property Owners: Proposed Federal Critical Habitat Designations Gone Wild."
• Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Full Committee meeting to consider an original bill entitled, "The Strong Start for America’s Children Act," and the nomination of R. Jane Chu, of Missouri, to be Chairperson of the National Endowment for the Arts
• Senate Judiciary Full Committee hearing to examine the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Program, focusing on supporting law enforcement officers
• Senate Finance Full Committee hearing to examine the nomination of Sylvia Mathews Burwell to be Secretary of Health and Human Services.
• Senate Indian Affairs Full Committee hearing to examine wildfires and forest management, focusing on how prevention is preservation.
• Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Subcommittee on Emergency Management, Intergovernmental Relations, and the District of Columbia hearings to examine the role of mitigation in reducing Federal expenditures for disaster response.

**Thursday, May 15**

• Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee Subcommittee on Surface Transportation and Merchant Marine Infrastructure, Safety, and Security hearing to examine Surface Transportation Reauthorization, focusing on local perspectives on moving America.