Weekly Legislative Update
Week of October 20, 2014

Congressional Outlook

Week of October 20th

While Members of Congress are in full-swing campaign mode, focus on the Ebola crisis continues in Washington. Last week’s House Energy and Commerce’s Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee hearing on the U.S. public health response to the Ebola outbreak will be followed by the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee’s hearing this week on coordination of a multi-agency response.

Week in Review

President Obama Appoints "Ebola Czar"

On Friday, President Obama announced that Ron Klain will serve as the administration's Ebola response coordinator. Klain will be responsible for coordinating the entire federal response to any threat of an outbreak in the United States.

Klain was chief of staff to Vice President Joe Biden from 2009 to 2011 and also served in the same position under Vice President Al Gore. This move by the Administration has evoked criticism from Republicans claiming that Klain is not qualified for the position. Read more...

President Obama's Plan to Replace Sequester

Last week, Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Director Shaun Donovan told reporters that President Obama will propose a plan in February to replace automatic spending cuts as part of his FY 2016 budget. Donovan said that the plan will not only address U.S. defense cuts, as some Republicans have proposed, but that the President favors a more "balanced approach" to taxes and spending. The President, according to Donovan, wants more spending on infrastructure and education. Sequestration comes back into full effect October 1, 2015.
Bipartisan Bill to Reauthorize Export-Import Bank Unveiled

Last week, California Representatives Maxine Waters (D-CA) and Gary Miller (R-CA) introduced a bill to reauthorize the Export-Import bank for five years, attempting to address conservative concerns while giving American businesses certainty that Congress is working on a long-term solution. Senators Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) and Mark Kirk (R-Ill.) introduced a bipartisan bill in the Senate this summer that has gathered broad support. The current reauthorization expires in June 2015.

White House Announces $170 Million Push to Help Long-Term Unemployed

On Wednesday, the White House announced $170 million in grants and partnerships aimed at helping the long-term unemployed get back to work. The funding will go to programs in 20 states, funding apprenticeship programs, career service opportunities with private companies, mental health options, and early education programs, among other resources. Read more...

WRRDA Implementation - Corps Begins Posting Guidance

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) has started to release implementation guidance for the 2014 Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA). Although there are approximately 200 identified guidance sections, only a handful have been completed and posted. During a recent meeting with Corps staff, TFG was told the Corps is actively working on the guidance documents and they will be posted on the Corps website periodically. Notwithstanding the lack of guidance posted thus far, it is helpful to review the list of sections forthcoming to get a sense of how the Corps is approaching its task of implementing WRRDA. Read more...

Congressional Schedule

Congress is currently in recess, however, one hearing is scheduled this week.

Friday, October 24

House Energy and Commerce Committee Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations hearing on “Examining the U.S. Public Health Response to the Ebola Outbreak.”