Weekly Legislative Update
October 28, 2013

Congressional Outlook

Week of October 28th

After a week away from Washington, the Senate returns tonight at 5:30 p.m. House and Senate negotiators are scheduled to meet Wednesday on the fiscal year 2014 budget resolution. The conferees were named as part of the deal that reopened the government and extended the government’s borrowing authority. Also on Wednesday, the House-Senate Conference Committee on the Farm Bill Reauthorization is scheduled to meet publicly for the first time to air out differences between the House- and Senate-passed bills. Food stamps and aid to farm producers are the key points of contention.

Week in Review

House of Representatives Overwhelmingly Passes Water Infrastructure Bill

On Wednesday, the House passed an $8 billion water infrastructure bill with a vote of 417 to 3. The Water Resources Reform and Development Act (H.R. 3080) authorizes 23 specific projects, and also weakens some environmental review requirements. The Senate passed its version (S. 601) in May with an 83-14 vote. The $12 billion Senate-passed bill does not authorize specific projects, but authorizes projects with a completed U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Chief of Engineers report submitted to Congress after November 8, 2007, and before enactment. The Congressional Research Service said in an October 18 report that 23 such reports had been transmitted to Congress. Staff in the House and Senate soon will begin preliminary conversations on how to merge the two bills.

Work Continues on National Flood Insurance Program Reforms
Delegations in both the House and Senate continue to address impacts of the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012 after the latest round of flood insurance premium increases went into effect on October 1. There are a number of bills pending in both chambers that call for reforms to last year's law and to delay the implementation of many of the law's changes—namely, those related to the increase in flood insurance rates. Representative Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) introduced the Homeowners Flood Insurance Relief Act of 2013 (H.R. 3312) on October 23, which calls for caps to flood insurance premiums, a phased-in approach to rate increases, and monthly premium payment options. Now that the government shutdown is lifted, a big push on issues surrounding Biggert-Waters 2012 is expected.

**Health Exchange Website Oversight Hearings Begin**

The House Energy and Commerce Committee held hearings on Thursday about the poor performance of the HealthCare.gov website, which is the federal portal for individuals to sign up for the federally-run health care exchanges. The Administration announced Friday that the site will be fully functional by November 30, and also said its top priority will be to fix glitches that have fed inaccurate information to insurance companies. For more, [click here](#).

**Calls to Delay Individual Mandate Meet Wall of Resistance**

The individual mandate requires all citizens to have health care coverage by March 31, 2014, or face tax penalties. With all of the issues surrounding HealthCare.gov's functionality, several congressional leaders (of both parties) have called for a delay of the individual mandate. On Wednesday, the White House announced a small, technical change that will allow for six additional weeks of transition for people who would otherwise face the tax penalty for not securing insurance by the end of March. For more, [click here](#).

**Congressional Hearing Schedule**

**Tuesday, October 29**

- House Financial Services Committee hearing on "Federal Housing Administration: Implications of a $1.7 billion Taxpayer Bailout."
- House Science, Space, and Technology Committee's Energy and Environment Subcommittees' joint hearing on "EPA Power Plant Regulations: Is the Technology Ready."
- House Ways and Means Committee hearing on "Affordable Care Act Implementation."
- House Energy and Commerce Committee's Energy and Power Subcommittee hearing on H.R.3301, the "North American Energy Infrastructure Act," to require approval for the construction and operation of oil or gas pipelines and electric transmission facilities across the national boundary of the United States for the import or export of oil, gas, or electricity to or from the United States, Canada, or Mexico.
- House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee's hearing on "Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Authorization Issues."
- House Natural Resources Committee's Water and Power Subcommittee hearing on "A Roadmap for Increasing our Water and Hydropower Supplies: The Need for New or
Expanded Multi-Purpose Surface Storage Facilities."

- House Energy and Commerce Committee's Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee hearing on "EPA's Regulatory Threat to Affordable, Reliable Energy: The Perspective of Coal Communities."
- Senate Judiciary Committee's Constitution, Civil Rights and Human Rights Subcommittee hearing on "Stand Your Ground Laws: Civil Rights and Public Safety Implications of the Expanded Use of Deadly Force."
- Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee hearing on "Housing Finance Reform: Essentials of a Functioning Housing Finance System for Consumers."
- Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee's Communications, Technology, and the Internet Subcommittee hearing "Broadband Adoption: The Next Mile."

**Wednesday, October 30**

- House Energy and Commerce Committee hearing on the failures of the Affordable Care Act enrollment website.
- Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee hearing on pending health care and benefits legislation.