Congressional Outlook

Week of November 25th

The House and Senate are both out this week; the House returns next week and the Senate returns on December 9.

The Senate has a packed agenda when it returns after its two week district work period. That agenda includes defense authorization; a bill to raise the minimum wage; a possible measure to address issues related to Affordable Care Act implementation; and consideration of a number of Presidential nominees, like Janet Yellen to be chairman of the Federal Reserve and Jeh Johnson to be the Secretary of Homeland Security, and Representative Mel Watt (D-NC) to head the Federal Housing Finance Agency. Also on the table are the FY 2014 budget, the farm bill, and the reauthorization of a water infrastructure bill.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING WEEK!

Week in Review

Two Year Budget Deal in the Works-Maybe

Although there is no deal yet, the joint budget conference committee, created by the October short-term spending deal that reopened the federal government, has been discussing a narrow agreement that would create budgeting stability through 2015, while setting aside larger, more contentious issues. For more, click here.

U.S. Senate Goes "Nuclear" on Nominees

In response to several failed attempts to clear presidential nominees for Administration jobs and judgeships, last week on a 52-48 vote, the U.S. Senate invoked the so-called "nuclear option" and changed its rules to eliminate filibusters (and the 60-vote requirement) on all executive branch nominees and of all federal judicial nominations except for the Supreme Court. For more, click here.

Talks on Farm Bill Grind to a Hault

Hopes for an agreement on the farm bill before the Thanksgiving holiday came to an end last week as talks fizzled. For more, click here.
Illegal Fire Hydrants?

A bill was introduced last week to exempt fire hydrants from the Safe Water Drinking Act, as current law could ban installation of new hydrants after January 4, 2014. For more, click here.

National Academy Panel Could Help EPA Quantify Stormwater Control Benefits

The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) is preparing to launch a new study quantifying the costs and benefits for development sites that reuse stormwater that they retain after storm events, an effort that could provide EPA with a key justification for its on-going push to require stormwater-retaining "green infrastructure" technologies in new construction through their rulemaking process. For more, click here.

As Lawmakers Work to Delay Flood Insurance Hikes, Conservatives May Block Efforts

House Republicans are now split on flood insurance rate hikes brought about by the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012. For more, click here.

Obama Administration Delays to Key Affordable Care Act Deadlines

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced that it will be pushing back deadlines for two key elements in the Affordable Care Act (ACA): rate setting by insurers and enrollment deadlines for individuals currently lacking conforming health coverage. For more, click here.

Democrats Worry About 2014 Midterms

Democratic Members of Congress started voicing their concerns over the HealthCare.gov debacle in a very public way last week. For more, click here.