

WASHINGTON WEEKLY REPORT

Congress is Back

The House and Senate returned from the August district work period this week for what is expected to be a very busy fall. House and Senate leaders will be faced with decisions regarding FY16 appropriations, surface transportation financing and policy, extending expiring tax provisions, as well as raising the debt ceiling, and expiring authorizations related to the FAA, TANF, and Child Nutrition programs. We expect Congress to be in session through December, yet each chamber will only have about 40 legislative days to address these issues as well as a host of others.

Before Congress can tackle any of the above pieces of legislation, it must act on a resolution to disapprove of the Administration's nuclear deal with Iran by September 17. What should have been an easy vote in the House on Wednesday showing strong disapproval of President Obama's deal with Iran, turned into a mess for the Republican leadership. Leadership was forced to pull its resolution and turn to a new strategy calling for several votes. This action only two days after Congress returned from the month-long recess highlights the clout of a small group of conservative Republicans and growing concern that the Republican House leadership could have a difficult time as it tries to move forward with appropriations and some of these other more controversial issues facing Congress this year.

FY16 Appropriations

Both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees have marked up every one of their respective bills. However, the FY16 Appropriations process came to a halt in both chambers in July, due to lack of a budget agreement to raise the discretionary budget caps. As reported previously, President Obama has asked Congress to raise the budget caps for FY16 and ultimately reverse the sequestration cuts that were put in place as part of the Budget Control Act of 2011. The Administration, Senate Democrats and some Republicans to include House Appropriations Chair Hal Rogers (R-KY) have called for negotiations to begin on a budget deal. However, because those discussions have not yet begun and the new fiscal year begins on October 1, we anticipate both chambers will soon begin work on a short-term Continuing Resolution (CR) that would fund most federal agencies through the beginning of the new fiscal year.

With only 8 legislative days on the calendar between now and October 1, Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee Hal Rogers plans to take up legislation next week to keep the government funded once the new fiscal year starts on October 1.

One issue that could make passage of a CR challenging is the call by some Congressional Republicans to oppose any spending legislation that includes funding for Planned Parenthood. The House and Senate

Upcoming Hearings & Events

September 17, 2015

Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee markup on child nutrition programs.

September 17, 2015

Senate Judiciary Committee markup on S.1814, legislation aimed at cities that shelter undocumented immigrants.

Republican Leadership are trying to work with some of their respective caucuses to devise a strategy that would avoid a government shutdown scenario. The House Republican leadership has offered to take up separate legislation next week that would defund Planned Parenthood for one year. On the Senate side, Majority Leader Mitch McConnell says Republicans do not have the votes to defund Planned Parenthood, but plans to file cloture next week on “some pro-life legislation.” Republican leaders would prefer to keep language to defund the group out of any appropriations bill in order to avoid any potential government shutdown.

Federal Regulatory Update

President Obama Issues Executive Order on Paid Sick Leave