



SUNY FEDERAL RELATIONS UPDATE

Friday, August 31, 2007

Both the US House of Representatives and the US Senate will reconvene next Tuesday, September 4, following their annual month-long August recess. Upon returning to Washington, Congress will address a number of contentious issues, including work on the appropriations bills that must pass Congress every fiscal year. Of the 12 must-pass bills, only the spending bill for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has passed both the House and Senate. While the House has approved all 12 of the appropriations bills, the Senate still has to act on 11 of the 12 spending packages. The President has already threatened to veto the spending bills if Congress does not eliminate \$22 billion from them and urged Congressional leaders to send the measures to him one at a time to avoid what he called a massive omnibus bill that “no one can read” and “in which anyone can hide wasteful spending.” However, it is widely assumed that, as is often the case, Congress will ultimately need to craft a single package (an omnibus bill) to send to the President later in the fall.

While members of congress spend much of August in their home districts meeting with their constituents, for the most part, their staff remains on Capitol Hill. The past several weeks have provided several opportunities to meet with New York State Congressional Delegation staffers assigned to handle higher education issues. I also had the opportunity to join a meeting with House Education & Labor Committee staff, who write and manage the House version of the Higher Education Act, with colleagues from the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Universities (NASULGC) and other state universities. I met with David Baime, Vice President for Government Relations at the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and Michael Trunzo and I also spent some time with John Fitzpatrick, learning about the SUNY Brockport Washington Program. John is Visiting Assistant Professor of Political Science at SUNY Brockport and the Director of SUNY Brockport’s Washington programs, <http://www.brockport.edu/washington/>.

Next week, SUNY’s campus-based federal relations representatives have been invited to attend the SUNY Federal Relations Summit in Albany. We’ve put together a terrific agenda for this meeting and I look forward to meeting with this group for the first time.

Below is additional information on various SUNY and higher education federal relations matters. Enjoy the long-weekend ahead!

Best,

Liz Clark
SUNY Director of Federal Relations

Please see below for more information on:

- **SUNY Federal Relations Summit Scheduled for September 6-7
(reminder)**
- **All-SUNY Alumni Reception in Washington, DC - September 25
(reminder)**
- **Administration Releases FY 2009 R&D Budget Priorities**
- **A Brief Recap of SUNY Federal Concerns Awaiting Action in the Fall**

SUNY Federal Relations Summit

SUNY's campus-based federal relations representatives have been invited to Albany on September 6-7, 2007 for the annual SUNY Federal Relations Summit in Albany. The agenda is attached for your information. We will begin with a lunch session at noon on Thursday, September 6 and we will conclude at 12:30pm on Friday, September 7. Sessions during the Summit will cover the following topics: status report and reflection on the FY 2008 SUNY appropriations portfolio, the SUNY FY 2009 appropriations request process, a Higher Education Act update, and a report on FY 2008 research and budget issues. ***Please RSVP by COB today if you are interested in attending.***



SUNY Summit
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All-SUNY Alumni Reception

An All-SUNY Alumni Reception has been scheduled for Washington, DC from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 25 at the Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill. For those campus presidents and government relations officials planning to attend, this will be a great opportunity for you visit your member of congress and/or key congressional staff to thank them for the work they may have done on your behalf thus far this year, to discuss any outstanding concerns or simply to touch base.

For those participants interested, I will be hosting a **SUNY Federal Relations Breakfast** gathering on the morning of Wednesday, September 26, from 8:00 am – 9:30 am in the Hall of States, 444 N. Capitol St, NW; Suite 235.

For those planning to travel to Washington for the Alumni Reception, you may want to be awarded that “Buffalo Nite” has been schedule for Wednesday, September 26, 2007. **Buffalo Nite in Washington, DC** is a widely attended event, sponsored by the New York State Society, and is one of the most popular receptions on Capitol Hill for New York State members of congress and their staff; native New Yorkers residing in Washington, DC; and friends of New York State. To order tickets and for more information regarding Buffalo Nite go to: <http://www.nyss-washdc.org/buffalo.htm>.

Administration Releases FY 2009 R&D Budget Priorities

On 16 August 2007, the White House’s Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) released the annual memorandum identifying research and development (R&D) priorities for the federal government. The memo, which is sent to the heads of executive branch agencies and departments, details what programs the Administration intends to prioritize during fiscal year (FY) 2009.

The memo, once again, highlights the American Competitiveness Initiative (ACI), provides guidance for priority setting among R&D programs, identifies interagency R&D programs that should receive attention within agency budget requests, and reiterates the “Investment Criteria” that agencies should use to improve investment decisions.

The August 14, 2007 budget memo can be read at:
<http://www.ostp.gov/html/FY2009FINALOMB-OSTPRDPriorityMemo.pdf>

A Brief Recap of SUNY Federal Concerns Awaiting Action in the Fall

ON THE SENATE HIGHER EDUCATION ACT REAUTHORIZATION BILL

The Senate on July 24 overwhelmingly approved its **Higher Education Act (HEA)** reauthorization bill (S. 1642) by a vote of 95-0. A companion measure has not yet been introduced in the House. The House Education and Labor Committee is expected to consider a reauthorization bill this fall, however, the Committee plans to first complete its work on reauthorization of No Child Left Behind Legislation, which again delays action on the HEA. Among other issues, we will be paying close attention to House efforts to address concerns regarding **illegal peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing, accreditation, and transfer of credit.**

ON HOUSE AND SENATE HEA RECONCILIATION LEGISLATION (S.1762)

This budget bill is considered the first part of HEA reauthorization, done as separate budget legislation to speed its consideration in both chambers. At its core, the “reconciliation” bill cuts student loan subsidies to lenders, and then uses the funds to boost student aid funding. Colleges and universities are very pleased with the approximately \$17 billion in new funding authorized for student aid programs. In addition to increasing the authorized level for Pell awards, increase student loan limits, and establishing a new “loan auction” for the PLUS programs, there are few concerns in some of the provisions within the legislation. For example, the higher education price watch list proposed by the House is developed using percentage increases in tuition. This could be problematic for state universities as given lower tuition rates as compared to private institutions, significantly lower dollar increases in tuition could appear like significantly higher tuition increases when reported as a percentage. Rumors before the August recess led us to believe that the House and Senate were close to coming to a final conference agreement on this HEA budget package, but those negotiations may have lost some steam given the break.

ON EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS

The House bill includes a \$390 increase in the **Pell Grant** maximum, to \$4,700; no cuts to **SEOG** and **LEAP**, and increases in **TRIO** and **GEAR UP**. The Senate bill, which has not reached floor consideration yet, maintains a level Pell Grant maximum at \$4,310; with no cuts to SEOG and LEAP and increases in TRIO and GEAR UP.

ON RESEARCH APPROPRIATIONS

Both the House and the Senate would match or exceed the R&D requests for the **National Science Foundation** (NSF; up 8.7 percent to \$4.9 billion in the House, up 9.1 percent in the Senate), and the **Department of Energy’s Office of Science** (DOE OS; up 16.8 percent to \$4.1 billion, up 18 percent in the Senate).

The House would add \$1 billion to a requested cut in biomedical research at the **National Institutes of Health** (NIH); although the resulting increase would be a modest 2.4 percent in percentage terms, it would be \$668 million above current-year funding for a total of \$29.1 billion for NIH R&D. The Senate would add \$1.2 billion, enough for a 3.2 percent increase for NIH R&D over 2007. The **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration** (NOAA; up 9.9 percent in the House and 18.1 percent in the Senate), In addition, appropriators would boost climate change research in other agency budgets, including targeted boosts for earth observing satellites and supporting research at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). **Department of Defense** R&D, however, would fall slightly by 0.7 percent to \$81.6 billion in House appropriations. The Senate has not yet marked-up its Defense spending bill.

On a related note, Congress gave final approval on August 2 to the **21st Century Competitiveness Act of 2007 or America COMPETES Act (HR 2272)**. This authorization bill responds to the recent National Academies *Rising Above the Gathering Storm* report and other reports calling on the U.S. to make a renewed commitment to encouraging science and engineering-based innovation for future U.S. prosperity. The bill would: create or reauthorize numerous science and math education programs at federal agencies; create a Technology Innovation Program (TIP) to replace the Advanced Technology Program (ATP); create an Advanced Research Projects Agency for Energy (ARPA-E) to fund high-risk, high-reward energy research; and authorize programs to encourage more U.S. students to pursue science and engineering careers. The bill would also authorize but continued funding increases for NSF, the DOE Office of Science and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).

ON TAX ISSUES

We expect to see action on a higher education tax bill this fall. The Senate Finance Committee has been working on a \$20-25 billion tax package that may combine popular higher education tax incentives such as **Hope** and **Lifetime Learning** credits, and the tuition deduction into a single credit. However, to help pay for the bill, the committee has been considering limits on other current provisions, such as **employer-provided educational assistance**. Congress must also take action before December 31 to ensure that the soon-to-expire **IRA Charitable Rollover** remains in place. This has been a popular and successful fundraising tool for development officers over the past two years.

ON PATENT REFORM

The **Patent Reform Act of 2007** is expected to remain on the congressional agenda. As Congress examines the patent system and promotes reforms that will enhance the capacity of that system to support invention, innovation, and development in the US and worldwide, research universities nationwide will seek address those aspects of the bill that may significantly affect the capacity of universities to maintain and strengthen their role in the innovation process.