LDA First Quarter Lobbying Report

As a reminder, 2014 first quarter Federal Lobbying Reports (January 1 – March 31) are due April 20th. We will be sending out a future email with additional details shortly. If you have any questions, please contact alex.krigstein@suny.edu.

House FY2015 Budget

On Wednesday, House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan (R-WI) introduced a non-binding FY2015 budget resolution that proposes to cut federal spending by $5.1 trillion over 10 years, with significant changes to major federal programs. Several important provisions affecting higher education include:

- Freezing the Pell Grant maximum award at the current level of $5,730 for the next 10 years
- Converting funding for the Pell Grant program from the current combination of discretionary and mandatory spending to solely discretionary spending
- Imposing an unspecified income cap on recipients, as well as place Pell Grants limits to students who attend college less than half time
- Eliminating the administrative fees paid to institutions participating in the Pell Grant program
- Eliminating the administrative fees paid to campuses for campus-based student aid
- Eliminating the in-school interest subsidy for undergraduate students on direct subsidized federal loans
- Eliminating funding for the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts

The House will consider the resolution next week, but the bill has little chance of passing the Senate, where leaders have stated they will not draft a budget since a bipartisan deal was reached in December.

FY2015 Appropriations

The first two FY2015 appropriations bills were approved by the House appropriations subcommittee: Legislative Branch, and Military Construction and Veterans Affairs.

However, Chairman Hal Rogers (R-KY) delayed full committee consideration until the Congressional Budget Office rescoring of the President’s budget (which may be released on April 10). It is likely the Committee won’t approve its “302(b) allocations” or funding levels until the week of April 28.
The Expiring Provisions Improvement Reform and Efficiency (EXPIRE) Act

The House and Senate tax-writing committees have begun work on reauthorizing the set of tax provisions called “tax extenders,” which expired at the end of 2013. House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dave Camp (R-MI), hopes to make some of the tax extenders permanent through the comprehensive tax reform package he introduced on February 26. However, Congress is not expected to approve a comprehensive tax reform package in the near future.

In the Senate, the Finance Committee approved a two-year package of tax extenders through the Expiring Provisions Improvement Reform and Efficiency (EXPIRE) Act, which includes temporary extensions of the deduction for tuition and fees and IRA charitable rollover tax credit. The two-year extension would serve as a “springboard” to broader tax reform. Higher education associations sent a letter urging the two provisions be included in any extenders bill. It notes the tuition deduction is particularly important to graduate students because they are ineligible for the American Opportunity Tax Credit, while the IRA Charitable Rollover has proven a valuable incentive for charitable giving.

Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (SaVE Act)

A Department of Education (ED) rulemaking panel reached consensus on a draft of new campus safety rules that would implement the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (SaVE Act), as part of the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act signed into law in March 2013.

The SaVE Act provision expands information colleges must incorporate into their annual crime reports and includes updated definitions of domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. It also includes national origin and gender identity as two new categories of hate crimes. The draft would help institutions better manage conflicts between protecting student confidentiality and safety that can occur in some situations, as well as providing more flexibility in the timeframe for a "prompt, fair, and impartial proceeding" to deal with complaints. Campuses would be required to have ongoing programs and awareness campaigns aimed at preventing dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking, and these programs would be tailored to the campus culture and based on research or assessed for effectiveness.

It is anticipated ED will publish the draft rules before the end of the month, with a 45-day comment period. Final regulations are expected to be published by November.

Department of Education Gainful Employment Rule

This Week, the Department of Education proposed regulations known as “gainful employment” that would apply to career training programs at all types of institutions — community colleges, state universities, and for-profit colleges. Comments are due by May 27, 2014. The proposal includes three metrics: debt to earnings and discretionary earning rates, and program-level student loan cohort default rates. Repeated failure on any of these metrics would render a program ineligible to participate in the financial aid programs for three years. AACC prepared an initial analysis of the proposed regulations