Congress returns September 8 from its August recess with a number of items on the agenda. With only a few weeks remaining before the November elections, lawmakers have to tackle a few "must-pass" items including a continuing resolution (CR). The House is scheduled to be in session for eight days Sept. 8 -11 and Sept. 16-19. It is also scheduled to be in the week of Sept. 29, but the expectation is that unless the CR gets messed up, they won't be back for that week. The Senate will be in for the weeks of Sept. 8 and 15 and the week of Sept. 23 if necessary.

Nothing official yet, but all signs are pointing to a clean CR with very few anomalies. The CR is expected to run until Dec. 12 (the last day the House is currently scheduled to be in session) The House is expected to act on the CR next week, so the real fight will be in December in the lame duck session.

**Director of Federal Relations to Step Down**

Michael Frame, SUNY director of federal relations, has been named director of federal relations for Florida State University. Mike has been director of federal relations for the SUNY system since 2011 and has served as the Director of Federal Relations for Binghamton University since 2006. We wish him the best of luck in his future position.

Alex Krigstein will continue to manage the day-to-day operations of the DC office and report to Jessica Todtman, Executive Director of Government Relations and Policy.

**Perkins Loan Program**

As you know, the General Education Provisions Act auto extends the Perkins loan program for another year until Sept. 30, 2015, confirmed recently by Congressional staff. We are waiting to see guidance from the Department of Education on how this impacts institutions.

SUNY advocated to the New York Congressional delegation on the importance of Perkins, urging them to extend Perkins until a long-term solution is developed as part of the higher education act. Without Congressional action, the SUNY Perkins fund, currently valued at $178 million is at risk of closing. In 2012-13, state operated campuses combined to award $21.2 million in Perkins loans to more than 26,000 students. New York State has the largest Perkins portfolio in the country ($862 million), representing 10% of the overall dollars awarded to 16% of the students who benefit from Perkins each year.

*The SUNY Office of Federal Relations will continue to provide updated information as it becomes available.*

**Higher Education Act Reauthorization**

In July, the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) released their 785-page [Higher Education Affordability Act (HEAA)](http://www.senate.gov) draft to reauthorize the Higher Education Act. The Committee
indicated that it plans to formally mark up a bill this fall, and requested comments from the higher education community by August 29, 2014. The draft proposal has wide support from APLU, AASCU and AACC and Senate Democrats, but has predictably drawn opposition ranging from private institutions, for-profit sector and Senate Republicans.

SUNY submitted comments (attached) to the HELP Committee, supporting the overall legislative goal of expanding college opportunity, making higher education more affordable and holding institutions more accountable. The letter highlighted the role of public university systems, while voicing support for the State-Federal Affordability Partnership, State competitive grant program, First in the World and Community College and Industry Partnerships. In addition, the letter voiced support for Campus-Based Aid including the future of the Perkins Loan program.

Several of the higher education groups submitted their own comments on the HEAA draft:

- American Council on Education
- American Association of Community Colleges
- American Association of State Colleges and Universities
- Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
- Association of American Universities

Separately, the Higher Education Task Force for Teacher Preparation submitted comments regarding teacher preparation provisions of the draft bill.

**White House College Opportunity Summit**

The White House announced it will host another College Opportunity Summit on December 4, 2014. The Administration plans to build on the work of the first summit, hosted last January, while launching some new initiatives. The summit will focus on building sustainable collaborations in communities with successful K-12 and higher education partnerships that encourage students to pursue higher education as well as supporting collaboration among colleges to improve college completion. (See the fact sheet, remarks, and White House report)