Congressional Outlook

Week of July 7th

The House and Senate are in session this week. The Senate will spend most of the week on a catch-all hunting and fishing bill sponsored by Democrat Kay Hagan of North Carolina and Republican Lisa Murkowski of Alaska. The bill, S. 2363, would reauthorize the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, streamline the expansion of public shooting ranges, facilitate commercial filming on federal lands and make permanent a pilot program for electronic duck stamps. Some see this bill as a way to prop up the fall races for vulnerable Democrats, such as Hagan and co-sponsors Sens. Mark Pryor (D-AR), Mark Begich (D-AK), Mary Landrieu (D-LA), and Mark Udall (D-CO). Additionally, Senate leaders are still seeking to overcome an impasse over a proposed "minibus" bundling the Agriculture-FDA, Commerce-Justice-Science and Transportation-HUD spending bills. The legislative vehicle, H.R. 4660, was pulled from the floor last month when senators couldn't agree on amendments.

The House has three measures on the calendar this week. HR 803 is a bill to reauthorize and streamline federal job training programs under the Workforce Investment Act, which would cut duplicative programs and more fully engage employers to meet their workforce needs. (Before departing for the July 4 recess, the Senate passed the bill on a 95-3 vote.) The House will also take up HR 4923, the FY 2015 Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, and HR 4718, to make the bonus depreciation deduction permanent (another one of the House's one-at-a-time expiring tax provision bills).

Passage of the Energy and Water Appropriations bill would mark the half-way point in moving all 12 appropriations bills through the House. The Senate, however, has yet to pass any of its spending bills, and even though Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) has set aside two weeks this month to focus on spending measures, neither side of the aisle have agreed on how to handle amendments, including controversial riders limiting EPA and Corps of Engineers proposed Clean Water Act (CWA) and greenhouse gas regulations.
Lawmakers in both chambers will try to come up with a way to shore up the Highway Trust Fund. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx told reporters last week that his department will stop paying states in full when the trust fund dips below $4 billion around the end of July. Senate Finance Committee Chairman Ron Wyden (D-OR) has proposed a draft measure that would infuse $9 billion into the trust fund over six months. Republicans, including House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dave Camp (R-MI), have opposed Wyden's proposed offsets, which include tax increases, and say they want some spending cuts.

Negotiators on the veterans' health bill, H.R. 3230, will continue working to resolve their differences over how to pay the extra millions it would cost to let long-waiting veterans get their medical care from private doctors rather than the Department of Veterans Affairs.

**Week in Review**

**Work During Recess on Highway Trust Fund Solution**

As reported last week, Senate Finance Committee Chairman Ron Wyden (D-OR) postponed the markup of a six-month $9 billion Highway Trust Fund bill. That measure calls for a variety of tax increases over 10 years, including a boost in the maximum heavy vehicle use tax, and a transfer of money from the general fund. House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dave Camp (R-MI) intends to have his own proposal ready for consideration, one that provides spending cuts and will be more receptive to House Republicans. Staff from the House and Senate worked over the break to find some middle ground to break the stalemate. The results of those talks are still unknown.

**Obama to Go It Alone on Immigration**

Last week, President Obama announced he would use his executive power to make potentially sweeping changes to the nation's immigration system without Congress, acknowledging the death of his more than yearlong effort to enact compromise legislation granting legal status to 11 million undocumented immigrants and, specifically, in response to House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) telling him that there would be no immigration bill considered by the House this year. The President also formally notified Congress today that he is seeking $2 billion in emergency supplemental spending and expanded powers to respond to the influx of unaccompanied children trying to enter the United States illegally in record numbers. More than 52,000 unaccompanied minors, as well as 39,000 adults with children, have been apprehended trying to cross the U.S.-Mexico border illegally since last October, with most of the children are coming from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. The Senate Appropriations Committee will have a hearing on the $2 billion emergency supplemental request on July 10, featuring Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson and HHS Secretary Sylvia Mathews Burwell.

**Congressional Schedule**

**Tuesday, July 8**
Wednesday, July 9

- House Natural Resources Committee's Public Lands and Environmental Regulation Subcommittee hearing on H.R.3994, the "Federal Lands Invasive Species Control, Prevention, and Management Act"; and H.R.4751, to make technical corrections to Public Law 110-229 to reflect the renaming of the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Exclusion Memorial.
- House Science, Space, and Technology Committee hearing on "Navigating the Clean Water Act: Is Water Wet?"
- House Appropriations Committee's Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittee markup of the FY 2015 Interior and Environment
- House Oversight and Government Reform Committee's Government Operations Subcommittee hearing on "Examining Solutions to Close the $106 Billion Improper Payments Gap."
- Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee on "Challenges at the Border: Examining the Causes, Consequences, and Responses to the Rise in Apprehensions at the Southern Border."
- Senate Special Committee on Aging meeting on "Improving Audits: How We Can Strengthen the Medicare Program for Future Generations."
- Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee hearing on "Promoting the Well-Being and Academic Success of College Athletes."

Thursday, July 10

- House Veterans' Affairs Committee hearing on "Service should not lead to suicide: Access to VA's Mental Health Care."
- House Agriculture Committee's General Farm Commodities and Risk Management Subcommittee hearing on "Implementing the Agricultural Act of 2014: Commodity Policy and Crop Insurance."
- House Financial Services Committee hearing on "Legislation to Reform the Federal Reserve on Its 100-year Anniversary."
- House Homeland Security Committee's Oversight and Management Efficiency Subcommittee hearing on "The Executive Proclamation Designating the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks a National Monument: Implications for Border Security."
- House Oversight and Government Reform Committee's Energy Policy, Health Care, and Entitlements Subcommittee hearing on "Medicare Mismanagement Part II:"
Exploring Medicare Appeals Reform.

- Senate Appropriations Committee hearing on "Review of the President's Emergency Supplemental Request for Unaccompanied Children and Related Matters."

**Friday, July 11**

- House Oversight and Government Reform Committee's Federal Workforce, U.S. Postal Service, and the Census Subcommittee hearing on "Oversight of the Federal Workforce: The Viability of the Senior Executive Service."
- Senate Judiciary Committee markup of S.517, the "Unlocking Consumer Choice and Wireless Competition Act"; and S.J.Res.19, a joint resolution proposing an amendment to the U.S. Constitution relating to contributions and expenditures intended to affect elections.