

FEDERAL REPORT

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CONGRESS LEAVES TOWN WITH ENERGY, HEALTH CARE ISSUES PENDING

With the August recess, Congress takes a four-week break to re-charge its batteries before diving back into some major issues in the fall.

Before it left town, the House Energy and Commerce Committee became the third and last House committee to mark up health care reform legislation. This legislation will likely be priority of the House when Congress returns after Labor Day. The University is closely following the process, as health care reform will impact us on many fronts—as a research institution, health care provider and employer.

On energy, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee delayed action on climate change legislation until the fall, giving senators until September 15 to develop a bill for consideration by the committee. There is much controversy about how to proceed with enacting legislation to reduce carbon emissions without having a negative impact on the economy. Work is ongoing by the higher education community to seek additional funding for research in any “cap-and-trade” system that may be enacted.

Meanwhile, work continued on the FY '10 appropriations. The House has now approved all 12 appropriations bills, while the Senate has completed four. Among those finished in both the House and Senate is the Energy and Water bill, which provides additional support for energy research, including funding to help establish the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (a new high-risk research program at the Department of Energy) as well as limited start-up funding for some energy “hubs,” research entities that will focus on particular energy issues. A conference committee will reconcile the two versions of the funding bill.

After Labor Day, the House will also consider the “Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2009.” Among other things, this legislation will ultimately redesign the Perkins Student Loan Program. UM students have accessed Perkins Loans for decades and we are working to ensure the new Perkins program will benefit UM students to the fullest amount possible.

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