

PB Washington Update - December 21, 2102 - Interim Update

Despite predictions that Congress might stay in session through the weekend or even cancel the Christmas recess in order to work on legislation to avoid the "fiscal cliff", the House went home last night after Speaker John Boehner pulled his "Plan B" fiscal cliff bill when it became apparent that he did not have enough Republican votes to pass it. The House will reconvene at the "call of the chair" which could occur as early as Thursday, December 27, but only if the leadership believes there is a deal for them to vote on. The Senate will recess later today and will return next Thursday to continue work on the Sandy Supplemental funding bill. Congress will then return to session on January 3 to swear in the new 113th Congress. Any pending legislation or nominations (such as Michael Huerta to be FAA Administrator) die as of January 2 and must be reintroduced in the new Congress.

The Senate has been debating the Hurricane Sandy Supplemental funding bill but has gotten bogged down over Republican objections to the size of the \$60.4B funding request and the fact that some of the money goes to mitigation and resiliency efforts, not just disaster relief. A few minutes ago, the Senate voted 91 to 1 to invoke cloture to permit continued consideration of the bill. Republicans and Democrats agreed to consider a series of 21 amendments that will be debated and voted on next Thursday, December 27.

In other news, Senators Leahy (VT) and Harkin (IA) opted not to take on the chairmanship of the Senate Appropriations Committee after the death of Senator Inouye (HI). The chairmanship will go to the third member in seniority, Senator Mikulski (MD), a sign of the waning influence of the once highly popular committee now that earmarks are prohibited and the committee does more cutting than spending. A decision on who will replace Inouye as chair of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee has not been made yet.

In the House, Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Ranking Member Nick Rahall yesterday announced the nine Democrats who will join the committee in the 113th Congress:

- Rep. Andre Carson (IN – 7)
- Rep. Janice Hahn (CA – 36)
- Rep. Rick Nolan (MN – 8) – Freshman (although previously served in Congress)
- Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick (AZ – 1) – Freshman (although previously served in Congress)
- Rep. Dina Titus (NV – 3) – Freshman (although previously served in Congress)
- Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney (NY – 18) - Freshman
- Rep. Elizabeth Esty (CT – 5) - Freshman
- Rep. Lois Frankel (FL – 22) - Freshman
- Rep. Cheri Bustos (IL – 17) – Freshman

In addition, last week Rep. John Garamendi (D-CA) from the Bay Area was added to the committee after having been previously bumped from the committee following the 2010 elections when the number of Democrats on the committee was decreased because of election losses. No word yet from the Republicans on who will chair the Aviation, Highways & Transit and Railroad Subcommittees.