

## **WASHINGTON WEEKLY REPORT**

### **September 26th – September 30th, 2011**

**Below is an informal overview of the Washington D.C. activities of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs:**

*THE SENATE WAS IN SESSION THIS WEEK*

*THE HOUSE WAS IN SESSION THIS WEEK*

### **CONGRESS AGAIN SCRAMBLES TO AVERT GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN**

After more than a week of debates, votes and legislative maneuvering, the House and Senate passed a short term Continuing Resolution (CR) to fund the government through October 4<sup>th</sup>.

The final steps toward the finish occurred on Monday in the Senate. After rejecting the proposed Senate FY12 CR (including \$3.65 billion in disaster funding, but removing the House-passed offsets) by a vote of 54 to 35, the Senate passed two FY12 CRs: (1) a 'clean' CR through November 18, which did not include disaster funding or offsets (H.R. 2608) by a vote of 79 to 12 and (2) a one-week CR through October 4 to enable the House to address the longer CR (H.R. 2017) by voice vote. The House unanimously approved the short-term CR in a quick pro-forma session on Thursday so it could be sent to President Obama's desk for signature by the end of the fiscal year (Friday, September 30).

#### Last Week...

With FY11 coming to a close and the FEMA Disaster Relief Fund possibly running out of funds at the same time, Congressional efforts last week focused on an FY12 CR to fund the federal government through November 18, 2011 and provide immediate disaster aid.

Last Wednesday the House failed to pass its proposed CR by a vote of 195 to 230. To the displeasure of some Republicans, the bill utilized the \$1.043 trillion discretionary spending cap that was enacted in the Budget Control Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-25), and not the \$1.019 trillion cap passed by the House in April. Additionally, the bill provided \$3.65 billion in disaster relief, including \$1 billion in FY2011 money for FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund which would be available immediately and which was offset by a rescission of \$1.5 billion unobligated funds from an energy-efficient auto program. All but six Democrats voted against the bill, citing what they deemed an inadequate level of disaster relief and opposing the offset from a clean energy program. They were joined by forty-eight Republicans who voted against the bill because they wanted further spending reductions.

Last Thursday, Republican leadership included an additional offset of \$100 million, rescinding money from the loan program that supported now-bankrupt Solyndra Inc. Gaining Republican support from the new offset, the House passed the revised CR (H.R. 2608) last Friday morning by a mostly party line vote of 219 to 203.

Due to disagreements over offsets to disaster relief funding, the Democratic-controlled Senate rejected the House-passed measure later that day by a vote of 59 to 36. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nevada) then filed a motion to advance an amended version of the House-passed bill that maintains the \$3.65 billion in disaster funding, but removes the two House offsets (Senate Democrats had been pushing for nearly \$7 billion in disaster funding).

## **SEN. RUBIO TRAVELS TO LIBYA**

This past week, Sen. Marco Rubio joined Senators John McCain, Lindsey Graham and Mark Kirk on the first congressional delegation to Libya since the fall of Col. Gaddafi's regime last month.

The delegation held meetings with Libya's de facto head of state, Mustafa Abdel Jalil, the chairman of the interim National Transitional Council (NTC), and the interim Prime Minister, Ahmed Jibril. Sen. Rubio is a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Sen. Rubio told reporters that he told those who he met in Tripoli that people who are oppressed in other parts of the world have looked to the Libyan revolution as inspiration. He also said the American role in aiding the transition is vital for the region. In a statement posted by the Miami-Herald, Sen. Rubio stated, "All in all, we're pleased with the progress they've made..." "We're very happy to see the pro-American enthusiasm that we encountered. And we have hope for Libya's future. Five years from now, three years from now, we could have a nation in the northern part of Africa that is Islamic and Arab, and yet pro-American and a democracy. And our ally in confronting the problems of the region and the world. That's the opportunity before us."

## **REPS. ROS-LEHTINEN, DIAZ-BALART, WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, RIVERA AND DEUTCH SEND BIPARTISAN LETTER TO STOP OIL DRILLING IN CUBAN WATERS**

Representative Illena Ros-Lehtinen, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, led a bipartisan congressional letter to urge the Spanish oil company Repsol to immediately abandon its collaboration with the Cuban regime to drill for oil off the coast of Cuba. Joining the Chairman were Reps. Diaz-Balart, Wasserman Schultz, Rivera, Wilson and Deutch, in addition to 27 other bipartisan members of Congress. In a statement from the House Foreign Affairs Committee, the Chairman stated:

"The decaying Cuban regime is desperately reaching out for an economic lifeline, and it appears to have found a willing partner in Repsol to come to its rescue. Repsol's

involvement with the Havana tyranny will without a doubt support the regime, and endanger those who stand up for basic freedoms in Cuba. It will bankroll the Cuban security apparatus that violently crushes dissent. Judging by past dealings with rogue regimes, Repsol doesn't seem to care if its business enriches dictators. For decades, Repsol even supported the Iranian regime by investing in Iran's energy sector. They ended that only after Iran's recent brutal repression of democracy activists made partnering with Iran too toxic, even for them. This oil drilling scheme endangers the environment, and enriches the Cuban tyranny. Those are two huge strikes. Repsol shouldn't need a third strike to walk away from this."

This effort by the Chairman is aligned with a bill she has introduced for the last two Congresses - the Caribbean Coral Reef Protection Act of 2011. The legislation would allow the U.S. to apply certain punitive measures against companies and individuals whom are investing in the Cuban regime's oil drilling sector. These efforts send a strong message to underscore the environmental and economic threat that Cuban oil drilling poses to the U.S. The legislation would:

- Deny visas to any alien (and his/her spouse and children) determined to have participated in an investment of \$1,000,000 or more that contributes to the development of petroleum resources off Cuba's coasts. (A waiver is included for this provision)
- Require the President to impose two or more sanctions (as outlined in Sec. 5) on any person who has made an investment of \$1,000,000 or more that contributes to the development of petroleum resources off Cuba's coasts or has trafficked in confiscated U.S. property.
- Require reports from the Secretary of State that describe any such investments and an assessment of the impact any such development of petroleum resources has on the environment and natural resources of Cuba's coast and Florida's marine environment.

## **REPS. DIAZ-BALART, ROS-LEHTINEN AND RIVERA CALL FOR UNCONDITIONAL RELEASE OF ALL CUBAN POLITICAL PRISONERS**

Representatives Mario Diaz-Balart, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and David Rivera held a press conference on Thursday to call for the unconditional release of Yris Tamara Perez Aguilar, the wife of Jorge Luis 'Antunez' Garica Perez, Donaida Perez Paseiro, Yaimara Reyes Mesa, and all prisoners of conscience in Cuba. In a press release from Rep. Diaz-Balart's office: "On September 26, these and other activists were brutally beaten and detained by Castro's thugs while going to "Section 21," Cuba's main State Security office, to demand information regarding the welfare of other political prisoners. Accounts provided by witnesses to the attack indicate that the injuries caused by the beatings were severe. Because the regime has refused any access to these brave activists, the full extent of their injuries, and their whereabouts, remain unknown.

## **D-BLOCK LEGISLATION IN HOUSE COMMERCE COMMITTEE – LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO WEIGH IN**

The House Energy and Commerce Committee appears ready to act as soon as next week on legislation that would free up more spectrum for wireless broadband technologies and possibly helping public safety officials build a national broadband communications network.

In preparation of the impending committee markup of the legislation, the U.S. Conference of Mayors requested that local elected officials throughout the country contact Congress and urge them to support legislation which would set aside a portion of the spectrum for public safety purposes and use the proceeds from other spectrum auctions to offset the cost of network deployment, operation and maintenance.

OIA and the DC lobbying team will continue to monitor the bill as it moves through the legislative process.

## **SUPER COMMITTEE – UPDATE**

Last Thursday, the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction (i.e. Joint Select Committee / Super Committee / Committee) held a hearing on “Revenue Options and Reforming the Tax Code.” Thomas Barthold, Chief of Staff of the nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation, was the only witness. The Super Committee is tasked with cutting \$1.5 trillion from the deficit over the next ten years, and the Committee expressed near unanimous support for overhauling the U.S. Internal Revenue Code (tax code) to help achieve this goal.

Most Committee Members believe that a tax overhaul would stimulate the economy and promote job creation. While Democrats believe that a restructuring of the tax code should include revenue raisers to reduce the deficit by \$1.5 trillion, Republicans have resisted the idea of raising taxes. Some Committee Republicans have advocated for a tax overhaul in the mold of the deficit-neutral Tax Reform Act of 1986, which lowered tax rates and eliminated tax breaks, to spur economic growth, broaden the tax base, and create additional revenue streams.

In addition to Thursday’s hearing, the Joint Select Committee held a “very productive” private session on Tuesday, September 20. Joint Select Committee Co-Chair Senator Patty Murray (WA) said that the panel “clearly” understands “the tremendous time challenge in front of us and the tremendous challenge in front of our country today.” The Committee must reach an agreement by November 23. The Super Committee’s third private meeting was scheduled for Thursday afternoon.

During the hearing, both Democrats and Republicans argued in favor of simplifying the corporate tax code and individual tax code by reducing exemptions, deductions and credits, and using the additional revenue to lower overall tax rates. There was wide

bipartisan support for reducing the nation's current top corporate rate of 35%, which ranks among the highest in the world.

A private Super Committee meeting was scheduled for Thursday afternoon. No future public hearings or meetings of the Joint Select Committee were announced or are currently scheduled.

## **U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT SEC. DONOVAN AND WHITE HOUSE HOLD CONFERENCE CALL**

MDPHA and OIA joined a conference call on Thursday held by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan. The purpose of the call was to discuss the President's American Jobs Act and how it can help create jobs. Sec. Donovan spoke about Project Rebuild (a provision of the American Jobs Act) that seeks to expand on the success of existing neighborhood stabilization efforts and create jobs.

The call also included discussion of the other elements of the American Jobs Act, including a proposal to \$35 billion to prevent layoffs of up to 280,000 teachers nationwide, while supporting the hiring of tens of thousands more and keeping cops and firefighters on the job. The President's proposal also includes \$15 billion in funding for Project Rebuild, which will put people to work rehabilitating homes, businesses and communities, leveraging private capital and helping neighborhoods impacted by foreclosures.

## **SENATE MOVES FORWARD WITH LEGISLATIVE VEHICLE FOR FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS**

Last week, the Senate passed the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) bill (H.R. 2832) by a vote of 70 to 27. An amendment was added to the bill that provides Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) benefits to workers displaced by foreign trade.

The White House and Democrats have made extension of TAA benefits their condition to moving forward with the South Korea, Columbia and Panama free trade agreements. Senate Republicans had offered a number of amendments during the debate to limit the availability of TAA benefits, but they were all rejected. Opponents of TAA argue that the program is too broad and has provided benefits to individuals who are unemployed for reasons unrelated to foreign trade manufacturing losses.

Following passage of the GSP/TAA bill, Speaker Boehner urged the President to send the FTAs to the Hill before the House votes on the GSP/TAA bill so they can consider them at the same time. The Administration has still not said when it will formally submit the three trade bills to Congress. However, since the South Korean President Lee Myung-bak is scheduled for an official state visit on October 13, there is some speculation that the FTAs may be officially transmitted to the Hill in advance of President Myung-bak's visit.

## **CLIMATE COMMUNITIES**

Climate Communities weekly call on Thursday was titled, “Integrating Climate Change Considerations into Transportation and Land Use Planning.” Benjamin Rasmussen and Lindsey Morse, both of the John A. Volpe National Transportation Systems Center, co-authors of the report on the Cape Cod pilot project, were both on the call and shared lessons learned and useful planning tips.

The mentioned that transportation and land use planning are some of the most important tools a local government has at its disposal to prepare for the impacts of climate change and lower its community-wide greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. According to Climate Communities, “By integrating climate change considerations into existing and continuing transportation and land use planning processes, localities can substantially mitigate their emissions, while also enhancing community resilience in the face of diverse climate change impacts.

The Federal Highway Administration, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service recently joined with local, regional and state stakeholders to conduct a scenario planning pilot project on Cape Cod, Massachusetts that tested innovative methods of integrating climate change considerations into transportation and land use planning efforts. Based upon the lessons learned from this project, the U.S. Department of Transportation has produced a framework for integrating climate change mitigation and adaptation measures into local planning processes.”

## **GOP PRESIDENTIAL FIELD 2012**

### *OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED WILL RUN:*

Michele Bachmann – U.S. Rep. from Minnesota  
Herman Cain – former CEO of Godfather’s Pizza  
Newt Gingrich – former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives  
Jon Huntsman – former Gov. of Utah & former Ambassador to China  
Gary Johnson – former Gov. of New Hampshire  
Ron Paul – U.S. Rep. from Texas  
Rick Perry – Gov. of Texas  
Buddy Roemer – former Gov. of Louisiana  
Mitt Romney – former Gov. of Massachusetts  
Rick Santorum – former Sen. from Pennsylvania

### *YET TO OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCE:*

Sarah Palin – former Gov. of Alaska  
Rudy Giuliani – former Mayor of New York City

## **FEDERAL LOBBYIST REPORTS**

Please use the following link to access the monthly lobbyist reports for the Washington D.C. lobbying team [http://www.miamidade.gov/intergov/federal\\_lobbyist.asp](http://www.miamidade.gov/intergov/federal_lobbyist.asp)

**NEXT WEEK'S CALENDAR: OCTOBER 3rd – OCTOBER 7th**

*The House & Senate will be in session early next week.*