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TO: NATIONAL COUNCIL SSMA OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE

RE: Legislative Report #31

A quick update on the FY 99 funding picture: Congress is expected to pass a 10-day Continuing Resolution at the end of September to keep the government running at FY 1998 spending levels until the scheduled date of adjournment October 9. Although work on the bills is feverish, only Military Construction funding has gone to the President so far. The Labor/HHS/Education bill (containing SSA's administrative budget) has run into serious problems in the House which must be resolved before it will go to the floor. It is noteworthy that the major difficulties holding up the bill in the House are disagreements among Republicans, with more moderate Members desiring higher levels of funding for some programs such as utilities assistance for the poor and job training/assistance programs -- social programs which remain important to their voting constituencies.

Beyond a short-term CR, bets are that a long term bill which rolls together the unfinished appropriations bills will be completed relatively timely and will carry the government into the 106th Congress, or perhaps through FY 99.

As of this week (things change!) Speaker Gingrich has reportedly decided not to end the 105th Congress in October, but merely to recess, keeping a pro forma session running while the House Judiciary Committee conducts the impeachment inquiry. By keeping the 105th Congress officially open, Members could be called back at any time a Judiciary Committee recommendation is made. (Under this scenario, it would be a "lame duck" Congress -- the re-elected together with those who were defeated at the polls -- making the decision of whether impeachment proceedings would be held.) Appropriations staff do not believe that anticipation of a lame-duck session will alter the prospects for enacting funding bills now which ensure that government operations continue uninterrupted into or through next year. But the likelihood of a lame duck session -- no matter how narrowly the purpose is presented at this time -- is definitely unwelcome news.

FERS Transfers?: For those contemplating a move into FERS during this one-time-only open season which runs through December, OPM has recently revised its "FERS Transfer Model" to refine computations and provide more information and better benefits projections. Visit www.opm.gov to check it out.

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