

The National Council of Social Security Management Associations, Inc.

**THE WASHINGTON REPORT
LEGISLATIVE REPORT 22-2000**

November 3, 2000

- **Legislative Overview**

As this is written, it is Friday, November 3rd, many weeks after most pundits thought Congress would have adjourned and gone home to campaign. The Senate finally recessed several days ago, and the House recessed a few hours ago. The Washington Post has aptly described this as the “unCongress”. Few would have predicted a lame duck session, but that is what will occur in about ten days, when Congress is scheduled to return to Washington. As House Appropriations Ranking Member David Obey (D-WI) put it, “There is no redeeming social value in a lame duck session...you can do damn near anything and get away with it.” House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL) commented that the session, “...could be nasty, brutish and short, or it could be nasty, brutish and long.”

On the agenda when Congress returns are the completion of appropriations bills (the most prominent being the L-HHS bill that includes the LAE), bankruptcy reform and taxes.

There are so many post-election variables that it is nearly impossible to predict how the lame duck session will play out. It is possible that either the House, the Senate or both could change from Republican to Democrat, and the same potential exists for the White House. If you hear anyone in the media explaining what all this could mean, have a good chuckle.

One interesting tidbit occurred last night when Congress approved \$7.1 million for the presidential transition -- \$5.27 million for the incoming administration and \$1.83 million for the outgoing Clinton Administration. In keeping with the spirit of the political season, there were attempts to delete the portion for the Clinton Administration, but cooler heads prevailed.

We will be providing a comprehensive legislative report upon Congressional adjournment.

- **Limitation on Administrative Expenses (LAE)**

As you know, on October 11th Rep. Clay Shaw introduced the “Social Security Administration Preparedness Act of 2000” (H.R. 5447). This bill exempts LAE from the budget caps and creates a new cap specifically for SSA’s administrative costs. The bill was cosponsored by Rep. Ben Cardin (D-MD). Rep. Shaw is in a heated race for re-election and some senior Democrats

are quite unhappy with Rep. Cardin's involvement in the bill – from a political, not substantive standpoint.

It now appears that the bill will not be part of an end-of-session omnibus bill, but rather as a “marker” for reintroduction in the next session of Congress. However, given the fluidity of the legislative situation, it's anyone's guess what will happen before the end of this Congress.

It is apparent that the information provided to Congress by NCSSMA members is having a significant impact. In addition to the two sponsors, there are now 4 cosponsors – Rep. James Rogan (R-CA); Rep. Paul Gillmor (R-OH); Rep. Jim Ramstad (R-MN); and Rep. Steven LaTourette (R-OH). We know there is also Democratic support for the bill, but reasons cited above the supporters are not listed as cosponsors at this time.

P.S. The phones in the House and Senate are all equipped with “Caller I.D.”

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