

The National Council of Social Security Management Associations, Inc.

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Although there are a couple of races yet to be decided, the Senate seat in Louisiana probably the most prominent among them, it is not too early to begin to assess how the 2002 election will affect the issues that are of importance to NCSSMA members. None of our “friends” on Capitol Hill were defeated, but the day after the election some of them were more important and some of them were less important than they were on election eve.

With a Republican-dominated Administration, House, and Senate, one can assume that the President’s budget recommendations will take on new significance in the lame duck session of the current Congress and in the upcoming 108th Congress. The stranglehold on the Fiscal Year 2003 appropriations bills was primarily due to the inability of House Republicans and Senate Democrats to reach an agreement on an overall budget. The House stood firmly by the President’s budget priorities while the Senate wanted to add about \$9 billion for activities related primarily to education and health programs.

Congress managed to pass two of the thirteen appropriations bills – Defense and Military Construction – before the election and before adjourning this week, but the remaining bills will likely be rolled into an Omnibus Appropriations bill in January. In the meantime, the non-defense side of government will operate on a Continuing Resolution that runs until January 11, 2003 as the appropriators re-write the FY03 bills to comply with the new Republican majority’s priorities.

One of the important issues caught in the budget stalemate was the federal pay raise. Under federal pay law, government employees will receive at least a 3.1% increase in their basic pay in January. The law also requires a “locality pay” adjustment for General Schedule employees. President Bush has until November 30 to make a decision on the locality adjustment. He could leave the total raise at 3.1%, designate the locality raise at 1.0% for a total of 4.1%, or he could choose a higher figure. Since the military has received a 4.1% increase and the House and Senate had stipulated that amount for civilian federal workers, it is a good bet that 4.1% will eventually be agreed to and there is even a possibility that it will be retroactive to January 1, 2003.

Relevant to the pay raise, there will be some changes in the Treasury, Postal and General Government Appropriations Subcommittees due to the elections. Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-MD), a champion for federal employee issues, will relinquish his Ranking Member position on the House Subcommittee as he joins the Democratic Leadership in the House; Rep. David Price (D-NC) will move into Rep. Hoyer’s Ranking position. Rep. Ernest Istook (R-OK) will continue as Subcommittee Chairman. As a result of the switch to a Republican majority in the Senate, Sen.

Ben Nighthorse Campbell (R-CO) will become Chairman of the corresponding subcommittee in the Senate and Sen. Byron Dorgan (D-ND) will become the Ranking Member.

The Limitation on Administrative Expenses account, which is funded through the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, remains with the same Congressional leaders except that the Ranking Member in the Senate, Sen. Arlen Specter (R-PA), will change places with the current Chairman, Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA).

Rep. Tom Davis (R-VA) seems to be favored in a three-way race to be Chairman of the House Government Reform Committee. This is the Committee that would act on the Supervisory Overtime issue. Rep. Davis and his staff are very familiar with the current inequities that exist and we have been invited to meet with his office to discuss a legislative resolution. The Senate counterpart, the Governmental Affairs Committee, will see a significant shift in leadership as Sen. Fred Thompson (R-TN) retires and Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME) becomes Chairman and Sen. Joe Lieberman (D-CT) becomes the Ranking Member. On the Subcommittee that specifically oversees government management issues, Sen. George Voinovich (R-OH) becomes Chairman and Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL) becomes Ranking Member. Sen. Voinovich has been an active voice for civil service reform and has interacted on a number of occasions with NCSSMA.

The change in the Senate dictates that Sen. Kent Conrad (D-ND), who has been a good friend to NCSSMA, will no longer be Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, but rather the Ranking Member. Sen. Don Nickles (R-OK) will become the new Chairman, replacing Sen. Pete Domenici (R-NM). The Budget Committee has responsibility for setting Congressional funding priorities.

The Senate Finance Committee, which has jurisdiction over Social Security policy, will see a change in its leadership as Chairman Max Baucus (D-MT) becomes Ranking Member and Sen. Charles Grassley (R-IA) becomes Chairman. Sen. Baucus has been helpful with regard to the Special Disability Workload issue.

The next Congress will convene in early January 2003. We will keep you up to date on any changes in committee assignments that affect NCSSMA.

Upcoming issues of the Legislative Report will include a wrap-up of the 107th Congress and a special report on the implications of the Homeland Security Act for federal employees.

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