

The National Council of Social Security Management Associations, Inc.
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As Summer Settles In, Congress Faces a Growing Mountain of Work

As the summer heat blankets Washington, and the August recess beckons, lawmakers are scrambling to work through a large backlog of important pieces of legislation, including the 12 annual appropriations bills. The August recess, which typically runs from the first or second week of August until after Labor Day, is a time that many Members of Congress use to go back to their respective districts and states, meet with constituents, and in a campaign year such as this one, shore up their poll numbers. The report below highlights some of the pieces of legislation that Congress will need to or has proposed to move in the very near future that could potentially impact NCSSMA members.

FY 2011 Budget Resolution and Federal Appropriations Bills

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 Budget Resolution and Federal appropriations bills have had a rocky time of it so far this year. The Senate Budget Committee passed a Budget Resolution out of Committee at the end of April, but it seems very unlikely that the full Senate will vote on it, or that the House will even take up a Resolution. As a result, with no spending allocations in place, none of the 12 appropriations measures for the coming fiscal year have even come out of subcommittee. Congressman Jerry Lewis (R-41st-CA), Ranking Member of the House Appropriations Committee stated, “short of immediate action, this year will mark the first time in more than 15 years that the House Appropriations Committee has failed to move any of its regular bills out of full committee by the end of June.”

This week has started to show some promise on the appropriations front as House Democrats seem to be poised to move a few of the appropriations measures. Because no FY 2011 Budget Resolution has been adopted, the first step in the appropriations process will need to be the passage of a budget enforcement resolution to set the caps for the annual spending bills. It seems more and more likely that the House will attach such a resolution to the war funding measure that could move sometime this week.

At this time it is likely that the House Appropriations Energy and Water Subcommittee will mark up its bill on June 24, and that other subcommittees such as Homeland Security and Military Construction/Veterans Affairs will follow soon after. We do not have an anticipated mark up date for the Labor-HHS appropriations bill in the House, but we will provide an update as soon as we have that information.

In the past few weeks NCSSMA President Joe Dirago, and Washington Representative Rachel Emmons have met with a number of different staff from the Senate and House Labor-HHS Appropriations Subcommittees, Senate Finance Committee, and staff from House Members’ personal offices. The purpose of these meetings was to further advocate for additional administrative funding for the Social Security Administration (SSA). These meetings proved to

be very useful and productive. From these meetings we have learned that the Senate Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee anticipates marking up their bill in late July (subject to change as always). The Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill contains the Limitation on Administrative Expenses (LAE) account which funds the administrative costs for SSA. As this bill starts to move we will provide details on the funding levels and language related to SSA.

Another important activity undertaken recently related to the FY 2011 appropriated funding for SSA was a letter from the SSA Advocacy Group to House and Senate appropriators. NCSSMA took the lead in drafting and circulating the letter and 41 organizations signed on in support. A copy of the letter is attached. We continue to move forward with Advocacy Group activities and have a meeting scheduled this week in Washington. NCSSMA President Joe Dirago and Grassroots Coordinator Rick Warsinskey will attend and we will provide information related to the meeting in an upcoming report.

Federal Pay

With the country facing skyrocketing budget deficits and the need for additional war funding, many leaders in Washington have been looking at possible spending options that may help address these concerns. Unfortunately, one idea that has been bounced around Capitol Hill is to place a freeze on federal employees' salaries and bonuses. Amendments to a number of different bills have been proposed in both the House and Senate that would in effect result in such a freeze. At this time all of the proposals and amendments offered have failed, but we fully believe that as the year progresses there may be additional legislative language that targets federal pay. We continue to weigh in with key Congressional supports regarding the issue and will provide updates on the issue as appropriate.

Directing Agencies to Cut Budgets

The Administration has also put forward budget cutting measures that could impact SSA and NCSSMA members. The White House issued a memo to all agencies on June 8, directing agencies to cut five percent from their budgets by identifying programs that do little to advance their missions or President Obama's agenda. This would be initiated by agencies in their FY 2012 budget requests. When agencies submit their FY 2012 budget they would provide information on the proposed cuts that have been targeted.

It is our understanding that this memo directs agencies to evaluate which programs may be duplicative, and the agencies are expected to target entire programs, not just perform an across-the-board cut. This request builds on a recent pledge made by President Obama to freeze non-security discretionary federal spending over the next three years.

As these cuts could potentially mean many changes for SSA we will make sure to keep you updated on the latest developments as the plans are formulated and the process matures. There was a similar proposal by the Administration last year related to the FY 2011 budgets for agencies. We discussed the issue in our meeting with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and it was suggested that the provision would not apply to SSA as it is a "staff driven"

agency as opposed to an agency that offers numerous programs. The issue is one that NCSSMA is discussing with SSA leadership. It is also one that we will raise as an agenda item during our anticipated meeting with OMB later this year.

Supervisor Training Legislation

In yet another hopeful step forward for the federal workforce and in turn NCSSMA members, the Federal Supervisor Training Act (H.R. 5522) was introduced on June 14. The lead sponsor of the bill is Congressman Jim Moran (D-8th-VA). Congressman Gerry Connolly (D-11th-VA) and Congressman Frank Wolf (R-10th-VA) also played key roles in the introduction of this legislation, and have agreed to sign on to the bill as original co-sponsors. This bill has been a top agenda item for the Government Managers Coalition (GMC). NCSSMA is a member of the GMC; other members are the Senior Executives Association (SEA), the Federal Managers Association (FMA), the Federal Aviation Administration Managers Association (FAAMA), and the Professional Managers Association (PMA).

The bill would require that members of the federal workforce moving into a supervisory position receive interactive training on a wide range of issues within one year of starting the position. The bill would also require that additional training take place at least once every three years following that initial year.

There is a companion bill on the Senate side, S. 674, which was introduced by Senator Daniel Akaka (D-HI). The Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee is scheduled to consider the Senate bill during a June 23 markup.

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