

Hicks-Ray Associates

Implementing Strategies, Achieving Success



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TO: WESTCAS Membership

FROM: Hicks-Ray Associates

SUBJECTS: Omnibus Bills and Snowstorms

The current Continuing Resolution that has been keeping the Federal government open since February 9 is due to expire at midnight on Friday. The Congress has been working on an FY18 Omnibus bill that is designed to address spending for the remainder of the current fiscal year through September 30th.

The timing for the release of the Omnibus text and floor debate was designed to both keep the government open after Friday and also get the Congress out of town to begin the two-week Spring recess. But all sorts of issues that have arisen at the last moment have delayed final consideration in both chambers and thwarted the “best laid plans” of the Leadership. It is looking like another short-term CR will have to be adopted to prevent a government shutdown after midnight Friday. This in turn will force the Congress to work at least through the weekend and give up some of their spring recess before this issue is resolved.

Another “complication” is the rule of the House Republican caucus to publish the text of all bills at least three days before they are debated on the House floor. Does this “three days” mean 72 hours? Or does it mean “Wednesday/Thursday/Friday” with a vote on Friday? All a matter of interpretation which has to be made in the context of Members wanting to get out of town and back to their States and Districts.

Another wild card today, the second day of spring, is a major snowstorm that has blanketed the DC area, shut down the Federal government, and snarled public transportation. Nobody is quite sure how this additional complicating factor will affect the release and final negotiations on passing the Omnibus, but this is an additional factor that makes a short-term CR more likely.

A number of hearings on the Hill have been cancelled today but the House and Senate are still in session. It must be remembered that when the Office of Personnel Management “shuts the Federal government” this refers only to the Executive Branch and not to Congress. Individual Congressional offices make the call on whether to close or not and the vast majority remain open if only because many Hill staff live near Capitol Hill and can walk to work.

We are following developments closely and will prepare and circulate a summary of the FY18 Omnibus when the text is released.

Fred Hicks - 703.866.4290
P.O. Box 2115
Springfield, VA 22152-0115
fred@hicks-ray.com

Tom Ray - 254.855.0880
P.O. Box 955
Waco, TX 76703-0955
tom@hicks-ray.com