

Hicks-Ray Associates

Implementing Strategies, Achieving Success



July 28, 2015

TO: WESTCAS Membership

FROM: Hicks-Ray Associates

SUBJECT: Congress Hits the Home Stretch Before Summer Recess

Congress is wrapping up its summer session this week in preparation for going on recess until September 8. Once the recess begins, Hicks-Ray will prepare a summer roundup of where WESTCAS priority issues stand at this point in the 114th Congress. Remember that we are only in the 7th month of a 24-month cycle that won't end until December 2016. A lot has happened so far, but it is important to remember that we are not even a third of the way through the entire process.

The reason it is advisable to wait to prepare a summary of where the Congress stands until after an adjournment is that things can change very quickly and be very confusing in the remaining days and hours of a session. A case in point is Senate consideration of the Highway bill has been getting a great deal of attention. This is H.R. 22. But did you know the title of this bill?

“A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1966 to exempt employees with health coverage under TRICARE or the Veterans Administration from being taken into account for purposes of determining the employers to which the employer mandate applies under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.”

Doesn't really sound like the Highway Bill does it? The answer is that H.R. 22 is being used as a vehicle to move the Highway bill in the House and Senate. Here is one of the actions taken yesterday in the Senate: “McConnell amendment No. 2329 to the language proposed to be stricken by amendment No. 2266 of a perfecting nature.” Seems pretty clear doesn't it? And that is before we get into other parliamentary procedures like “filling the tree” and “the nuclear option.” Fortunately the “nuclear option” is just a description and not to be taken literally. No matter how angry they may appear on TV, we don't think that Senators want to use nuclear weapons on their colleagues.

The good news is that once the dust has settled after an adjournment it will be possible to review where all sorts of issues stand including WESTCAS priorities such as WOTUS, water infrastructure funding, drought legislation, and more. Please stay tuned for further Hicks-Ray updates once the Congress leaves town.

One thing you might be thinking of, as a WESTCAS member, is the question of how a Western El Nino might impact Federal water policies. Earlier this summer, the 5-year Texas drought was ended for most of that State by two months worth of torrential rains. Could the same thing happen to California and much of the rest of the Arid West? And if it does, is this a time to return water issues to the backburner or does this create a fresh opportunity to address a number of long-standing water infrastructure and water policy issues?

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