



washington dc update

August 23, 2011

The Last Weeks of Summer

According to the calendar, summer has more than a month to go, until September 23rd to be exact. But in terms of the political cycle, summer will end exactly three weeks from today when the Congress goes back into session.

That's where the certainty ends because we are in uncharted territory with regard to the Federal government, and especially how it interacts with agencies of local government. The agreement earlier this month between the Congress and the President with regard to the Federal spending mandates the creation of a Congressional "Super Committee" of twelve Members, evenly divided between the House and the Senate and evenly divided between Republicans and Democrats.

This Committee is charged to find at least \$1.5 trillion in additional spending cuts and to provide details by November 23rd. The Congress will have a further 30 days to vote on these cuts in an "up or down" procedure that has yet to be finalized. Given the tendency of the Congress to go to the brink before finally deciding on important issues, as witnessed earlier this month with regard to the issue of defaulting on the Federal debt, it would seem a good bet that Congress will be at its task right up until Christmas. About the only thing certain is that lots of Congressional staffers will likely be unable to make it home for the holidays because it will be too late for them to get air reservations out of DC.

Aside from the histrionics of the current process, what is really being decided here is the future course of Federal spending and obligations, including investment in infrastructure. Every WESTCAS member has a huge stake in this process and WESTCAS has a unique opportunity and obligation to provide input for our elected Representatives as they go through this process. WESTCAS will be working hard to keep you updated and able to do this in a timely and effective manner.

That is important because public officials like to announce that they are all for investment in infrastructure while at the same time cutting what they admit is totally inadequate funding for this purpose.

Summary & Take-Away .

- Congress returns 9/7/11 (see [Calendar](#))
- Super Committee charged with finding at least \$1.5 trillion in cuts
- Deadline is 11/23/11 for Super Cmt report
- Congress to vote on cuts before Christmas
- Actions will dictate the future of federal spending
- Investment in infrastructure will need lots of local gov't and WESTCAS support

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