



# washington dc update

October 4, 2011

## Uncertainty and Challenges

*♪ The Times They Are A-Changing... ♪*

In the current political situation inside the Beltway there are far more questions than answers. For example, the CR finalized by Congress this week only keeps the government open until November 18. Then what? House and Senate Appropriators have begun private negotiations aimed at creating a year-end Omnibus Appropriations bill that would allow spending issues to be resolved for FY12 which began only 4 days ago. But does anybody believe that a complex Omnibus containing hundreds of billions of dollars in domestic discretionary spending can be cobbled together in less than 9 weeks?

If this is the case, what are the implications for having FY12 spending issues remain unresolved at the beginning of calendar year 2012 with January and February featuring a large number of Presidential primaries. Can anything, including an Omnibus, be put together in such a charged atmosphere?

In addition to FY12 funding, there are even weightier long term issues looming. Perhaps you have seen news reports of the protesters who have been demonstrating in Wall Street and saying that revolution is in the air. While some of these people have been “picturesque” to put it mildly, it should be remembered that the water resources community is facing its own revolution in both funding for projects and also regulatory compliance.

In our view, these are the two over-riding issues that we face today:

- How will water resources projects be funded in the future and what will be the degree of Congressional involvement? This is important because the current Authorization and Appropriations process differ greatly from most of the infrastructure bank proposals.
- What kind of regulatory hoops will future water resources projects have to jump through? Over the past few months, we’ve seen an unprecedented push-back from the regulated community, including water resource agencies, in response to hundreds of proposed new regulations from the Executive Branch. But we are far from reaching any consensus over what the future will look like.

The water professionals of WESTCAS have a vital role to play as stakeholders create this new vision for how the water resources community will operate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Your voice is particularly important because you are providing the perspective of the Arid West within this larger issue.

Much of our presentation at the Fall conference later this month and also those of others on the Legislative program Thursday morning will be updating you with regard to these issues and even more importantly, receiving your input with regard to how WESTCAS can be the most effective advocate.

Change, perhaps revolutionary change, is upon us. This can lead to a greater good only if groups like WESTCAS and its members involve themselves in the process.

**Summary & Take-Away .**

We are not proposing a sing along, but the times are changing and over the next few days and weeks. The latest CR expires on Nov 18<sup>th</sup> and both the House and Senate are putting their energies into a year-end Omnibus Appropriations bill; a complexity that will be difficult to create in nine weeks.

**Take-Away:**  
WESTCAS should consider the implications of the current budget efforts on FY 12 water resources spending. Will an Omnibus add opportunity or will the campaign season make any spending bill an impossibility.

WESTCAS' Fall conference will discuss these issues; your input is needed to help make WESTCAS an effective advocate.

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