

Hicks-Ray Associates

Implementing Strategies, Achieving Success



April 6, 2017

TO: WESTCAS Membership

FROM: Hicks-Ray Associates

SUBJECT: Congress Prepares to Adjourn for Spring Break

There are two schools of thought with regard to Congressional recesses. One holds that with so much on its plate that both the House and Senate should stay in session to address the backlog of work. The other school argues that recesses provide an essential pause from the rancor that has been display since January. Whichever view you subscribe to, the House of Representatives is going to adjourn shortly after 11:15 AM this morning and not return to session until Tuesday, April 25. After the Senate completes action on the Judge Gorsuch nomination today and tomorrow they will follow the House into adjournment until the last week in April.

When they return there will be just two legislative days until the expiration of the FY17 Continuing Resolution on April 28. That gives the House and Senate Leadership a very small window to finalize plans on FY17 spending bills and ensure that the federal government does not close down at midnight Friday, April 28. Failing that, the Congress could also pass another short-term CR that would last for perhaps a week to allow them to time to complete work. There is little appetite on either side of the isle for a government shutdown.

It seems likely that agreement will be reached by the end of April or shortly thereafter concerning a final accommodation on FY17 spending. But there will be no respite in the budget wars since both the Congress and the Trump Administration will have to move immediately to address the FY18 Appropriations process. This will include transmission to the Hill of the line item details of the President's proposed spending for the new fiscal year. The President released a 50-page budget blueprint on March 16 containing overall budget requests for Federal agencies but no details.

WESTCAS will provide the membership with a breakdown on the details of the budget documenting proposed spending impacts for water infrastructure programs that impact the Arid West. This will include specifics on programs within the EPA, Corps of Engineers, and Bureau of Reclamation and will be followed by suggested draft letters for the Board to consider that express WESTCAS' views on the budget.

The only thing we know for sure is that the FY18 budget process is off to a slow start. This is typically the case with new Administrations after they take office in January. But the fact remains that a great deal of work will have to be done between May and October 1. If you thought the first three months of the new year were a wild ride you had better be prepared to tighten your seat belt for this next period that runs from late April to the 4th of July recess.

In the meantime, we can all sit back in wonder as the Senate considers whether to invoke the "nuclear option" with regard to the nomination of Judge Gorsuch to the Supreme Court.

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