

Hicks-Ray Associates

Implementing Strategies, Achieving Success



April 19, 2017

TO: WESTCAS Membership

FROM: Hicks-Ray Associates

SUBJECT: The Calm Before the Storm

One of the long-term objectives of WESTCAS has been support for Federal investment in water infrastructure. Important decisions on spending for this purpose will be made in Washington this coming week.

Congress is in the second week of its spring recess and will reconvene next Tuesday, April 25th with first votes postponed until 6:30 PM that day. That leaves only three full legislative days for the House, the Senate, and the Trump Administration to resolve the FY17 budget cycle and prevent a government shutdown that would otherwise begin at midnight on Friday, April 28 with the expiration of the Continuing Resolution.

April 28 seemed a long way in the future when the current CR was adopted back in December but not now.

It is common knowledge on the Hill that almost all the work on the unpassed FY17 Appropriations subcommittee bills was completed before the recess. The only question that must be finally answered is how these bills may be packaged in a final FY17 appropriations agreement. An omnibus that would fold all of the unpassed subcommittee bills into a single measure? A “minibus” that would include some of the most popular bills such as Energy and Water Appropriations and put the remainder on a CR that would last the rest of FY17? Or a CR for all of the unpassed bills?

These possibilities won’t be resolved until Congress goes back into session next week and begins debating the option that the House and Senate Leadership have chosen. If there are any “glitches” in this process Congress will have the option of a government shutdown or passing a very short term CR of perhaps a week to provide more time for negotiation. There seems to be a consensus that a government shutdown should be avoided but we’ll see how that sentiment actually plays out next week in the heat of the House and Senate floor debates.

For those who don’t get their fill of appropriations drama associated with the FY17 cycle just stick around because line item details on the Trump FY18 budget are due to be released in early May. We know from the budget summary of March 16 that USEPA, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Department of Interior are in line for significant cuts. WESTCAS must be prepared to engage in the FY18 Appropriations cycle once we have these details.

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