

Hicks-Ray Associates

Implementing Strategies, Achieving Success



August 14, 2017

TO: WESTCAS Membership

FROM: Hicks-Ray Associates

SUBJECT: Dog Days of Summer

Wikipedia defines “dog days” as “the period following the heliacal rising of the star Sirius which Greek and Roman astrology connected with heat, drought, sudden thunder storms, lethargy, fever, mad dogs and bad luck.” So perhaps the Congress was heeding ancient astrologers when it recessed during the month of August.

Whatever the astronomical definition of dog days may be, for official Washington the term is generally taken to mean the mid-point between the time when Congress goes on recess for the summer and the time right after Labor Day when they are scheduled to reconvene. In other words, this week. With the President mostly out of town and the Congress in recess, it is easy to forget that just three weeks from tomorrow Washington will wake up after its August slumber and face important decisions on spending. This includes the run-up to the start of Fiscal Year 2018 on October 1 and the necessity of increasing the Federal debt ceiling.

There can be no doubt that both issues will be dealt with, probably with a Continuing Resolution with regard to FY18 and by some strategy for once again raising the debt ceiling. The unresolved question is what kind of political theater will accompany both of these actions. The only thing we know at present is that the Congress will be in session for only 12 days in September. That’s a lot of work and very little time to come to an agreement.

One looming issue is a potential showdown between Republican deficit hawks in the House of Representatives who want to tie an increase in the Federal debt ceiling with reductions in Federal spending. The problem is that many House Republicans seem to be satisfied with the fact that House Appropriators have generally rejected the request of the Trump Administration to trim FY18 domestic discretion spending. This directly impacts spending that is crucial to the Arid West including Corps of Engineers Feasibility Studies, Construction, O&M, and Bureau of Reclamation Water and Related Resources, WaterSmart Grants, and Title XVI funding, all of which have relatively healthy FY18 levels at present in their respective House and Senate Appropriations bills.

Will the House Republican Leadership try to cut a spending deal with its deficit hawk Members in which domestic discretionary spending is cut in return for support of an increase in the Federal debt ceiling? Or will the House Republican Leadership trade more spending for the Democratic votes necessary to pass an increase in the debt ceiling and FY18 Appropriations bills?

Just a reminder that no matter how dull and boring the “dog days of summer in Washington” may seem to be, interesting times are just around the corner.

Fred Hicks - 703.866.4290
P.O. Box 2115
Springfield, VA 22152-0115
fred@hicks-ray.com

Tom Ray - 254.855.0880
P.O. Box 955
Waco, TX 76703-0955
tom@hicks-ray.com

Hicks-Ray Associates

Implementing Strategies, Achieving Success



Fred Hicks - 703.866.4290
P.O. Box 2115
Springfield, VA 22152-0115
fred@hicks-ray.com

Tom Ray - 254.855.0880
P.O. Box 955
Waco, TX 76703-0955
tom@hicks-ray.com