



washington dc update

Happy New Year

January 5, 2011

The 111th Congress adjourned just two weeks ago so there hasn't been much of a break before the convening of the 112th Congress which begins today. Despite the various press reports concerning a hyper-active 112th, the reality is that the convening of a new Congress more closely resembles a bear coming out of hibernation rather than an Olympic athlete doing a 100 year dash.

The Senate, after being sworn in today, will recess until January 25th for a State "work period" and to observe the Martin Luther King Federal holiday. But thanks to a legislative rule, today's Senate Day will be extended until January 25 to allow Senators to continue to discuss with each other the proposed rule changes that would reduce the ability of the minority to hold up legislation.

Here are some highlights of the House Calendar for January:

- January 5-7, in session.
- Week of January 10th, votes postponed until 6:30 PM on Tuesday, January 11th then adjourn on January 12 until January 18th.
- Week of January 17th, in session 18th with votes postponed until 6:30 PM on the 18th through the 20th.
- Week of January 24, in session Monday through Wednesday, January 24-26, with votes postponed until 6:30 PM on January 24th.
- Then the House will be out of session from January 27th through February 8th.

This is a challenging schedule particularly considering that the FY11 Appropriations cycle has to be somehow finalized. Currently all government agencies are running on a Continuing Resolution until mid-night, March 4th. That means that the Congress is going to have to decide whether to produce a completely new FY11 Appropriations omnibus or go on some form of year-long Continuing Resolution. It's also significant that the President will submit his FY12 budget to Congress on February 14th but the Congress will be adjourning on February 17th and then not be back in session until February 28th with a government shut-down looming at the end of that week.

And in addition to FY11 and FY12, the new Congress will be dealing with a large number of newly introduced legislation, including bills that made it almost through the Congressional process but which died in the waning hours of the 111th Congress. To add to the challenge, there are scores of new Members and staff and also new Committee Chairs and staff, particularly in the House.

Organizations like WESTCAS are particularly valuable at times like the present because we can focus in on issues such as water resources for the arid west and do so at a moment when the political process is almost overwhelmed by many competing issues.

Now that you have a better idea of the schedule that will be followed over the coming weeks, we will begin to focus on how WESTCAS can be a key player with regard to water resources issues during the 112th Congress.

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