



washington dc update

September 7, 2011

Interesting Times

The first day after Labor Day in Washington was as atypical as the political process into which we are now going. There was rain, wind from the Northeast, and a high in the mid 60's. Amidst all of this, the Senate returned to session yesterday evening and the House this evening. On Thursday President Obama will try to squeeze in his speech on jobs before a joint session of Congress and before the kick off of the Green Bay/New Orleans Saints football game. Maybe he can shave off a few minutes by rushing into the chamber and up behind the lectern instead of pausing to shake hands.

The "Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction," AKA the "Super Committee" begins its work of trying to find \$1.5 trillion in additional cuts in Federal spending over the next 10 years. And the Congress, not much more than 12 or 13 legislative days this month, must pass a Continuing Resolution to keep the government from shutting down after mid-night on September 30th. This will be tight because Congress will be adjourned the last week in September.

There is a fundamental disconnect in Washington between reality and perceptions of reality. On the one hand, it is hard to deny that there is a huge deficit in the infrastructure needs of our nation, very much including water resources in the Arid West. On the other hand, there is near universal disagreement on how to address this challenge. Perhaps the only thing that all sides can agree on is that the "answer" to all of this will have a powerful influence on the future strength and prosperity of the United States.

If this isn't enough, this first day after Labor Day puts us on the fast-track of a political season that will not end until the first Tuesday in November.....of 2012. The stakes and the issues have never been greater in living memory. For those who are students of the political process, this should be one of the greatest moments for "viewing" in the history of our country. But we must also remember that all of us are not just watching. We are participants. You might recall those civilians who packed picnic baskets and went out in their carriages to watch the first battle of Manassas. All of these individuals were obliged to beat a hasty retreat back to Washington that evening. It is best for WESTCAS members to fully understand that we will all be on the front lines during the next 14 months because much of what will be decided will impact the Arid West for the next generation.

Summary & Take-Away .

As Congress reconvenes, the Super Committee is beginning its deliberations on trying to cut \$1.5 trillion. The irony of the Super Committee cutting and the nation facing an unprecedented infrastructure replacement challenge will be played out on the edge of our nation's uncertain future prosperity during the next few months.

Washington needs to hear from the nation's water, energy, and transportation providers. WESTCAS has an important voice in speaking for the Arid West.

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