

The Construction Legislative Week in Review

Congress Passes Appropriations Bills that Include AGC Priorities Extension Until October 20

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While, Congress is finalizing the remaining FY 2001 appropriations bills, another continuing resolution (CR) was approved today to fund the government through October 20. Only four appropriations bills remain unresolved (District of Columbia, Commerce Justice, Foreign Operations, and Labor, Health and Human Services). Congress is likely to pass the remaining bills by the middle of next week and return home to campaign for the elections.

Appropriations Bills Include AGC Environmental Riders: The Senate passed the Veterans Affairs/Housing and Urban Development spending package that includes a provision that would prevent the EPA from designating counties in nonattainment of the 8-hour ozone standard until the Supreme Court has ruled on the validity of the standard. If a county were to be placed in nonattainment, the Federal Highway Administration would be forced to cut off highway funds from the state. The bill also increases funding for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) to \$1.35 billion. The Safe Drinking Water SRF is increased to \$825 million. Community Development Block Grants received \$5.1 billion, a \$300 million increase over FY 00. The bill will be ready for the President' signature early next week.

Energy and Water Attached to VA HUD Bill: After President Clinton vetoed the previously passed FY 2001 Energy and Water Appropriations bill, the Senate approved a new version of the bill and attached it to the just passed VA HUD FY 2001 Appropriations Bill. The Energy and Water bill includes \$1.7 billion for the Army Corps of Engineers General Construction, an increase of \$300 billion over FY 2000; and \$347 billion for Mississippi River and Tributaries, an increase of \$38 billion over FY 2000. President Clinton will sign the new Energy and Water bill. Language that would require the Corps of Engineers to further study the new nationwide permits (NWP) is contained in the Energy and Water appropriations bill. The Corps would have to complete a cost analysis of the recently finalized changes to the NWP program and develop a plan to handle the current backlog of permits as well as a system to process the new permits in a more timely manner.

Congressional Leaders Hang Tough on Ergonomics Rider: House and Senate Leaders are stressing the importance of the ergonomics rider in negotiations with the White House. As in years past, ergonomics is a top legislative agenda item of the AFL-CIO and thus of the Clinton Administration. The latest word is that the administration may support a 6-month delay in the promulgation of the final rule, making the regulation's release a job for the next President.

Interior Bill Signed: The President signed the Interior Appropriations legislation this week. The bill appropriated \$202 million to the Abandoned Mine Land trust fund. Additionally a new trust fund was created for conservation programs. The Land Conservation, Preservation and Infrastructure Improvement Trust Fund provides \$1.6 billion in the first year, increasing over six years to \$2.4 billion. This fund uses off shore oil royalties for coastal restoration and other programmed monies for historic preservation, and other state conservation programs.

Death Tax Done for the Year: Last week we reported on a new death tax relief bill by Rep. Tanner (D-TN) that sought 20% across the board rate cuts and an exemption increase. AGC has learned that this bill is no longer under consideration by congressional leaders. Items that may still be included in a tax bill are pension reforms and community renewal tax incentives.

Senate Confirms Maj. Gen. Robert B. Flowers as New Chief of Army Corps of Engineers: On October 6, the U.S. Senate confirmed Maj. Gen. Robert B. Flowers as the new Chief of the Army Corps of Engineers. Maj. General Flowers will be the 50th Chief of Engineers, and will assume command on October 23, 2000.

State PAC Filing Deadline Approaches; Form 8872 due to IRS by October 15th: AGC Chapters with state PACs are reminded to file Form 8872 with the Internal Revenue Service before the October 15th deadline. AGC has filed comments with the IRS asking that state PACs be exempt from the new disclosure requirement. Also, Rep. David Vitter (R-GA) has introduced legislation to accomplish this same goal. Until either one of these efforts is successful, however, Form 8872 must be filed. You can obtain a copy of the form at the IRS website., a link is available at www.agc.org under Hot Topics.

Voting Records for Members of Congress Available on AGC website: Find out today if your member of Congress was one of 40 members of the House who voted with AGC every time or find out if you are represented by one of 17 members who voted against AGC every time on key AGC legislative issues such as the demolition of the Death Tax, health care and ergonomics. Simply go to the AGC website www.agc.org and click on the link for "AGC's Political Toolkit." Also use this link to register to vote. Voter registration deadlines have passed in most states, but there's still time to register in the following states: Alabama, Vermont, Iowa, New Hampshire, Maine, South Dakota, Connecticut, Nebraska, Kansas, Utah, Massachusetts, Oregon, Delaware & Minnesota. Utilize "Congress At Your Fingertips" Located in the Member's Only Section at www.agc.org to contact your Congressional Representatives.

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