



October 23, 2013

Government Shutdown and Debt Ceiling Continuing Resolution

The federal government reopened after a 16-day partial government shutdown, allowing over 800,000 furloughed employees to return to work. On October 16, 2013, President Obama signed into law the "Continuing Appropriations Act, 2014" (H.R. 2775), a continuing resolution to fund the federal government through January 15, 2014, and to raise the debt ceiling until February 7, 2014. The Senate approved the legislation by an 81-18 vote and the House followed suit by a 285-144 vote, with 87 Republicans in favor and 144 against. The continuing resolution will fund government operations at the current sequester levels of \$986 billion. An agreement was also reached during these negotiations for Congress to convene a 29-member bicameral budget committee. By December 13, 2013, this committee is required to develop a joint budget, known as the "conference report," to recommend a plan for long-term spending levels and deficit reduction. Congress will then need to enact a new appropriations measure before the continuing resolution expires on January 15, 2014.

The U.S. Department of Education (department) was forced to furlough 90 percent of their approximately 4,225 full and part-time staff, although those workers along with the other furloughed federal workers will receive back-pay. Fortunately, the government shutdown did not impact the awarding of student financial aid or servicing of student loans. But due to the government shutdown, the department postponed the negotiated rulemaking session on gainful employment. Originally set for October 21st through 23rd, negotiators will now meet from November 18th through 20th to examine gainful employment regulations relative to Title IV participation in vocational programs.

Congressional Community Colleges Bills of Interest

H.R. 357: GI Bill Tuition Fairness Act of 2013

This bipartisan legislation introduced by Representative Jeff Miller (R-FL), Chairman of the House Veterans Committee, and ranking member Representative Mike Michaud (D-ME), would require courses of education provided by public institutions of higher education that are approved for purposes of the educational assistance programs administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to charge veterans tuition and fees at the in-state tuition rate. This bill was amended in the House Veterans' Affairs Committee and is now on the House Union Calendar. The Senate has an identical version of this bill, S. 257 by Senator John Boozman (R-AR) which is currently being heard in the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

H.R. 359: CAMPUS Safety Act of 2013

This bill, introduced by Representative Robert Scott (D-VA) would establish and operate a National Center for Campus Public Safety. The Center would: (1) provide quality education and training for public safety personnel of institutions of higher education and their collaborative partners, including campus mental health agencies; (2) foster quality research to strengthen

the safety and security of institutions of higher education; and (3) serve as a clearinghouse for the identification and dissemination of information, policies, protocols, procedures, and best practices relevant to campus public safety, including off-campus housing safety, the prevention of violence against persons and property, and emergency response and evacuation procedures. This bill is in the House Judiciary Committee and was referred to Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigation.

H.R. 803: The Support Knowledge and Investing in Lifelong Skills Act (SKILLS Act)

H.R. 803, also known as the SKILLS Act relates to statewide and local workforce investment systems and activities, identification of eligible training services providers, and use of funds for employment and training activities. As for community colleges, this bill would facilitate greater collaboration with community colleges by allowing states to determine the standards required for eligible training providers and allows local boards to contract with community colleges directly to provide training to large groups of participants instead of on an individual basis. H.R. 803 would also consolidate 35 existing streams of funding into a single Workforce Investment Fund. This Republican bill, introduced by Representative Virginia Foxx (R-NC), passed out of the House Education and Workforce Committee with a 23-0 vote. The Democrats left the hearing early in protest from not being included in the drafting of the bill, so none of the Democrats voted. This bill passed on the House floor with a 226-191 vote and is now in the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions.

H.R. 1949: Improving Postsecondary Education Data for Students Act

This bill, sponsored by Representative Luke Messer (R-IN) passed out of the House and was referred to the Senate on May 23, 2013. It would direct the Secretary of Education to convene the Advisory Committee on Improving Postsecondary Education Data to conduct a study on improvements to postsecondary education transparency. Specifically, the task force will explore factors that students and families have, want, and need when researching their postsecondary education options. This bill is being considered in the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions.

H.R. 2637: the Supporting Academic Freedom Through Regulatory Relief Act

On July 24, 2013 H.R. 2637 by Representative Virginia Foxx (R-NC) was amended in the House Committee on Education and the Workforce. This bill repeals: 1) the gainful employment regulation; 2) the state authorization regulation, which forces states to follow federal requirements when deciding whether to grant an institution permission to operate within the state; and 3) the credit hour regulation, which establishes a federal definition of a credit hour and increases the government's control over institutions' academic affairs. In addition, the bill amends the incentive compensation regulation to ensure third-party service providers are allowed to enter into tuition sharing agreements with nonprofit colleges and universities to aid in the development of distance education platforms. It would also prohibit the Department of Education from issuing related regulations until after Congress reauthorizes the Higher Education Act. This bill was amended in the House Committee on Education and the Workforce on September 10, 2013, and was placed on the House Union Calendar.

S. 3: Strengthen our Schools and Students Act

Introduced on January 22, 2013, by Senator Harry Reid (D-NV), Senate Bill 3 would build on recent efforts to continue to make higher education more affordable and to improve access and success for all students. It would also provide all teachers with the support they need to ensure student success, including the creation of a new national Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Master Teacher Corps to recognize and help retain STEM teachers and strengthen STEM education in public schools in the United States. This bill is in the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee.

S. 216: Tyler Clementi Higher Education Anti-Harassment Act of 2013

Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) introduced Senate Bill 216 on February 4, 2013, which would prevent harassment at institutions of higher education. It would authorize the Secretary of Education to award grants, on a competitive basis, to eligible entities to enable them to carry out authorized activities such as counseling or redress services to students who have suffered from harassment or students who have been accused of subjecting other students to such harassment; or to educate or train students, faculty, or staff of institutions of higher education about ways to prevent harassment or ways to address such harassment if it occurs. This bill is waiting to be heard in the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. The House version of this bill is H.R. 482 and is currently in the House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training.

S. 1356: The Workforce Investment Act of 2013

This bipartisan bill, introduced by Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and Senator Johnny Isakson (R-GA) on July 31, 2013, is the Senate's version of reauthorizing the Workforce Investment Act. The bill focuses on effective use of real-world data, performance indicators, and stringent assessments and evaluations to determine the impact of workforce investments. It also restructures state and local Workforce Investment Boards (WIB) by making state WIB seats optional and unlike the House's SKILLS Act (H.R. 803) it would keep the community colleges seat on the boards. The Senate bill also closely aligns workforce systems with regional economic development and labor markets. In doing so, it would reauthorize the Community Based Job Training Grants program, which would provide competitive grants to support community college partnerships that train individuals in high-demand industry sectors and occupation. S. 1356 is being heard in the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions.