

## Issue #7

## GOVERNMENT RELATIONS UPDATE

Sept. 1, 2010

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**WASHINGTON, D.C., UPDATE**

As Rice welcomed the start of a new school year, both the [House of Representatives](#) and [U.S. Senate](#) adjourned for their August break and are scheduled to return to session the week of Sept. 13. Despite trying to adjourn at the beginning of August, both the House and Senate were called back to session to give final approval to two FY10 supplemental appropriations bills: one to bolster state funding for Medicaid and education, the other to beef up border security.

July was a busy month in Washington, D.C., since the [last update](#). The House of Representatives approved a number of measures, including two of the 12 FY11 appropriations bills (Military Construction-Veterans Affairs and Transportation-Housing, Urban Development). The [House Appropriations Committee](#) completed work on nearly all of the remaining appropriations bills, positioning the measures for consideration – perhaps as part of a larger package – by the full House later this year.

The Senate confirmed [Justice Elena Kagan](#) to the [Supreme Court](#), which made her the fourth woman ever to serve on the court. The Senate also approved a number of executive branch and judicial nominees before breaking for the recess.

The NASA reauthorization bill – which is compromise legislation between the [Obama administration](#) and members of Congress who were upset about his proposed plan – continues to gain momentum in both the House and Senate. The Senate approved legislation to reauthorize NASA; the House of Representatives delayed action until September.

The Senate also passed an aid package for state and local governments aimed at offsetting budget shortfalls to prevent teacher layoffs and maintain health coverage through the Medicaid program. [House Speaker Nancy Pelosi](#), D-Calif., called the House back into session to vote on Aug. 10 on the state and local aid measure, which

was approved by the Senate after the House had initially adjourned for the recess. [The Senate Appropriations Committee](#) also continued its work on the individual FY11 appropriations bills; however, the full Senate has not yet approved any FY11 spending measures. The new federal fiscal year begins Oct. 1, but it is unlikely that the full Senate will take up consideration of any of the individual appropriations bills before the November elections. Although the specifics of the situation remain uncertain, it seems likely that Congress will enact a continuing resolution to keep the government running through the elections.

When Congress returns it is expected to remain in session for only a few weeks before adjourning for members to campaign for the November mid-term elections. However, [Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid](#) has confirmed that the Senate will return to Washington for a lame duck session on Nov. 15 to complete legislative business that was not finished before the elections.

## **HIGHER EDUCATION ISSUES THAT IMPACT RICE**

### ***NASA reauthorization***

The [Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee](#) on July 15 unanimously approved a \$58.4 billion, [three-year authorization bill](#) for NASA and its programs. For the past several months, the Obama administration and members of Congress have been in a heated battle over the future direction of NASA and its human space flight program. Following the committee vote in July, the full Senate voted for the bill via voice vote on the Senate floor. According to [spacenews.com](#), “The U.S. Senate passed a NASA authorization bill Aug. 5 that would add a space shuttle flight to the manifest next year and require the space agency to get started immediately on a heavy-lift rocket capable of supporting manned missions beyond low Earth orbit.” In addition, the legislation directed NASA to pursue development of a multi-purpose crew transportation vehicle based on Orion for use with the Space Launch System (SLS) discussed by [spacenews.com](#). Houston’s Johnson Space Center will retain program management of SLS. The Senate bill also included \$1.6 billion in funding for commercial space flight over the next three years.

In another indication that the compromise language receives broad support, the Senate Appropriations Committee included language that mirrors the committee-passed NASA authorization. In response to this effort Sen. Hutchison said: “I am very pleased to see the full Senate Appropriations Committee embrace our bipartisan NASA bill approved last week by the Commerce Committee. Our compromise legislation would preserve our workforce, our creativity and the national commitment to sending humans to space.” To read more, click [here](#).

Things are less certain in the House. A July vote on [H.R. 5781](#) in July was delayed by members of the California delegation because of opposition by [SpaceX](#), a California-based company, to the reduction in spending for commercial space flight in the House version of the bill. They planned to use the delay to lobby for more commercial funding. We will keep you updated.

In addition, there has been some speculation that any NASA language might be included in the long-term continuing resolution that will almost certainly be passed before the end of the fiscal year on Oct. 1.

### ***COMPETES reauthorization***

The Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee voted July 22 to approve its portion of the [America COMPETES Act \(S. 3605\)](#), with three-year authorizations for the [National Science Foundation \(NSF\)](#) and the [National Institute of Standards and Technology \(NIST\)](#). The authorization for [DOE Science](#) is expected to be added later.

During the mark-up, the committee adopted 20 amendments, including a substitute amendment that reduced NSF and NIST funding levels by 10 percent. According to the [Association of American Universities \(AAU\)](#), other amendments would require the [Commerce Department](#) to study the U.S. economy and innovation infrastructure, including an assessment of the nation's economic competitiveness. Within one year of completing the study, the department would be required to develop a 10-year national innovation and competitiveness strategy. To read more about the Senate COMPETES legislation, visit here for the [committee press release](#), or refer to [previous legislative updates](#).

### ***FY11 appropriations update***

The House and Senate Appropriations committees have begun moving their FY11 funding bills in earnest.

In total the House Appropriation subcommittees has marked up all 12 bills, with two of these bills – the Transportation-HUD and the Military Construction-VA bills – now approved by the full House. Meanwhile in the Senate, the Appropriations Committee has approved all but three of their appropriations bills. The defense, interior and legislative branch appropriations bill are still pending at the subcommittee level. To see a comprehensive update, [click here](#).

In further developments in the Senate, the Appropriations Committee on July 15 [approved](#) its 302(b) subcommittee allocations for FY11, which sets the funding limits for each bill. The approved levels cut \$14 billion from the president's overall discretionary spending request. The committee-approved total is \$7 billion below the number approved by the House in its budget enforcement resolution and \$4 billion below the spending cap in the FY11 budget resolution approved by the Senate Budget Committee. These funding differences will only add to the challenges of meeting the October deadline for funding the government.

AAU has an updated chart of the FY11 funding priorities, which is available [here](#). It shows the funding levels for the [Department of Energy](#), [National Science Foundation \(NSF\)](#), [National Institutes of Health \(NIH\)](#) among many other programs important to Rice.

## **FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

### ***State aid bill***

Within hours of final congressional approval, President Obama on Aug. 10 signed into law a \$26.1 billion aid package for states ([H.R. 1586](#)). The measure will provide state governments with \$16.1 billion for Medicaid assistance and \$10 billion to avert layoffs of public school employees.

There was little expectation that the Senate would be able to pass this legislation when the House adjourned for its six-week summer recess on July 30. However, Senate Democrats were successful in securing two Republican votes needed to pass the measure, by including some tax increases and spending cuts to cover the costs of the bill. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., then called the House back into session on Aug. 9 and 10.

Based on reports from the [Chronicle of Higher Education](#), the funding in H.R. 1586 will not directly benefit colleges and universities, but it will help states fill budget gaps and avert cuts in other areas, including education. Legislatures in more than half of the states have already approved budgets anticipating that Congress would provide the added funding.

As discussed in the [July legislative update](#), the state aid bill included a maintenance-of-effort (MOE) requirement covering both K-12 and higher education, which aims to keep states from reducing their support of public K-12 and higher education.

[Rep. Lloyd Doggett](#), D-Texas, was successful in including language that exempts Texas from the MOE section of the bill and requires the state to guarantee that the federal money will not be used in place of state education funds. These efforts were met with vocal opposition from [Sen. John Cornyn](#), [Gov. Rick Perry](#), [Attorney General Abbott](#) and many other Texas Republicans. To read more, [click here](#).

### ***Border security bill***

During their brief return from the recess, the House also approved a \$600 million FY10 funding bill for increased border security ([H.R. 6080](#)). Among other things, a total of \$176 million would go for hiring 1,000 new border patrol agents to form a "strike force," and about \$80 million would be for new [Immigration and Customs Enforcement \(ICE\)](#) personnel and border interdiction, some of which will be spent on the Texas-Mexico border.

The Senate then acted quickly on Aug. 12 and approved the measure by unanimous consent, which meant senators did not have to return to Washington for the vote.

## **STATE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

### ***State budget outlook***

As Rice prepares for the upcoming legislative session in Austin this January, the state budget outlook continues to be foggy.

[Texas Comptroller Susan Combs](#) announced the other week that the state sales tax receipts for July were up for the fourth month in a row. According to the [Fort Worth Business Press](#), state sales tax receipts for July were \$1.69 billion, up 2.2 percent compared with last year. "Total monthly sales tax revenue has now exceeded year-ago levels for the last four months," Combs said in press release. "Sales tax collections in major sectors such as retail trade, the oil and natural gas industry and construction are up from a year ago. We are monitoring these sectors to see if collections are returning to consistent growth." The full release can be found by clicking [here](#).

However, [Harvey Kronberg's Quorum Report](#) is reporting that "the latest figures from the Comptroller's Office indicate the state's general revenue fund could be running a deficit of \$1.3 billion by the end of next fiscal year. About this time last year, the Comptroller's Office was talking about a positive general revenue (GR) fund cash balance of \$1.9 billion for next fiscal year – a turnaround of \$3.2 billion." It was later reported that most of this deficit can be filled by the rainy day fund, but this indicates that the Legislature will face a very difficult budget situation during the upcoming session.

## **IN CASE YOU MISSED IT**

### ***President LeBron welcomes Gov. Rick Perry to Rice***

Texas Gov. Rick Perry visited Rice University in July to discuss the need for innovation and competition in the energy industry to help relieve U.S. dependence on foreign energy, protect the environment and create jobs. He was speaking on day two of the [Emerging Energy Technology Conference](#) held at Rice's Jones Graduate School of Business. To read the full story, [click here](#).

### ***Rice highlighted during Houston's 174<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration***

Rice was featured several times during last week's celebration of the city of [Houston's 174th](#) birthday. Leading the way was Rice alumna and [Mayor Annise Parker](#), who named [Houston Hall of Fame](#) inductees and pointed out that many also have Rice ties.

2010 Houston Hall of Fame Inductees included:

- \* Jose Cruz, former Houston Astro and the father of Rice athlete and alumnus José Luis Cruz, Jr.
- \* Bob McNair, owner of the Houston Texans and former Rice trustee.
- \* Kathy Whitmire, former mayor of Houston and former director of the Rice Institute for Policy Analysis, which predated the Baker Institute.

This year the Spirit of Houston honoree at the event was the NASA Johnson Space Center. Rice alumnus and former chair of the Rice Board of Trustees George R. Brown and Rep. Albert Thomas, Rice alumnus and former House Appropriations chair, were instrumental in bringing the space center to the Houston area in 1961. The Spirit of Houston award ceremony included a video from the International Space Station which featured a special message from Rice graduate and NASA's first native Houstonian astronaut, Shannon Walker.

Rice sponsored a table at the event and hosted staff from Rep. John Culberson, R-Texas, Rep. Gene Green, D-Texas, Sen. Rodney Ellis, D-Houston, and Rep. Cohen, D-Houston,

### ***Rice continues to build relationships with the Texas delegation***

Government Relations Director Cory Kennedy represented Rice at the July Association of American Universities (AAU) meeting in Washington, D.C., and used the occasion to visit with many of the Texas congressional delegation offices (listed below), as well as Rice alumnus Rep. John Kline, R-Minn. In addition to building relationships with these policymakers, Kennedy gave fresh examples of the value Rice contributes to Texas and the nation. The visits included staff for:

Sen. Kaye Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas  
Rep. Kevin Brady, R-Texas  
Rep. John Culberson, R-Texas  
Rep. John Carter, R-Texas  
Rep. Chet Edwards, D-Texas  
Rep. Kay Granger, R-Texas  
Rep. Al Green, D-Texas  
Rep. Gene Green, D-Texas  
Rep. Ruben Hinojosa, D-Texas  
Rep. Shelia Jackson Lee, D-Texas  
Rep. Michael McCaul, R-Texas  
Rep. Pete Olson, D-Texas  
Rep. Ciro Rodriguez, D-Texas  
Rep. Pete Sessions, R-Texas

### ***Computing Research Advocacy (CRA) blog***

The Computing Research Association (CRA) is an association of more than 200 North American academic departments of computer science, computer engineering and related fields; laboratories and centers in industry, government and academia engaging in basic computing research; and affiliated professional societies. The CRA has a blog that we encourage all interested parties to visit by [clicking here](#).