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FEDERAL UPDATE

Congress Returns for Busy Fall Agenda

Lawmakers returned from the August recess this week to confront a busy fall agenda that includes the major issues of health care reform, energy and climate change, FY10 appropriations and extension of a surface transportation reauthorization. Below is a summary of the policy areas affecting historic preservation for the remainder of the first session of the 111th Congress.

APPROPRIATIONS

FY'10 Interior Appropriations (HR 2996). The appropriations calendar in the Senate has been delayed due to consideration of health care reform. Consideration of the Interior Appropriations bill (HR 2996), which contains funding for the national historic preservation program, will be delayed at least two weeks. The House has passed all 12 appropriations bills, but inaction in the Senate will require that Congress pass a continuing resolution before the start of the new fiscal year on October 1st. Significant differences exist between the House and Senate for historic preservation funding - the House has approved \$90.675 million while the Senate Appropriations Committee mark is \$74.5 million.

TAX

Community Restoration and Revitalization Act. The National Trust and its preservation partners continue the preparation for the reintroduction of the "Community Restoration and Revitalization Act" this month. Significant progress has been made in garnering original cosponsors from the previous version of the Act as well as securing endorsements from organizations such as the American Institute of Architects (AIA), Smart Growth America, the U.S. Green Building Council, the National Parks and Conservation Association and the Northeast-Midwest Institute. The new version of the bill will contain significant incentives for energy-efficiency renovation and retrofits for historic properties.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation Reauthorization Extension. House Highways and Transit Subcommittee chairman Peter DeFazio (D-OR) stated this week he supports extending the current surface transportation authorization bill until the end of the year, but agreed to work hard to complete a full reauthorization by the spring of 2010. However, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee chair James Oberstar (D-MN) continues to insist that a the full reauthorization pass before it expires on September 30th. However, chairman Oberstar's plan will be difficult to carry out because the House Ways and Means Committee first needs to identify a funding mechanism to pay for the bill, but Ways and Means Committee chairman Rangel has made it clear that they plan to focus on health care legislation this fall. The White House and the three committees of jurisdiction in the Senate over the reauthorization bill support

extending the current law for 18-months. The Trust and its transportation coalition partners are closely monitoring the negotiations about the full authorization in the interim, including potential impacts of high-speed rail, transportation enhancements (TE) funding, Section 4(f) and regulatory streamlining issues on historic and cultural resources.

PUBLIC LANDS

Chesapeake
Conservation and
Restoration
Program
Reauthorized by
House

Chesapeake Bay Waterways Reauthorization (HR 965). The House passed a bill (HR 965) on Thursday by a vote of 311-107 that would provide a permanent and open authorization for the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Water Trails Network, a program to educate people about conserving and restoring the Chesapeake watershed area. The program has been authorized at \$3 million annually since 1998, most recently under a 2002 law on wetlands conservation (PL 107-308). The program was first authorized in 1998 by a migratory bird protection law (PL 105-312) and funding is used to provide grants for parks, volunteer groups, wildlife refuges, historic sites, museums and water trails for conservation, interpretation and restoration activities.

Santa Cruz Valley
NHA Fails to Pass
House Under
Suspension
Calendar in
House Over
Border Security
Concerns

Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Act (HR 324). The House failed to pass HR 324, a bill to establish the Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area around Tucson in an effort to protect the area's cultural and archaeological resources, under suspension of the rules. Sponsored by Rep. Raul Grijalva, the bill was defeated over GOP concerns of the effects the designation may have on private property rights and homeland security, with the bill's opponents noting that the heritage area includes some of the most heavily traveled routes for narcotics smuggling and human trafficking.

Public Policy Weekly Bulletin

September 11, 2009 — Volume 4, Issue No. 27