ECONOMY: HOUSE PASSES SLIMMED DOWN JOBS; CA RECEIVES TRANSPORTATION FUNDING BOOST

On March 4, 2010, the House passed the Senate’s $15 billion jobs bill by a vote of 217-201, after agreeing to offset the cost of the bill to ameliorate concerns of Blue Dog Democrats that it violated Pay-Go. The bill provides payroll tax exemptions to small businesses for hiring new workers, and broadens expensing deductions for them as well. It also extends the Build American Bonds program and includes an extension of the Highway Trust Fund.

The Highway Trust Fund provisions had initially brought objections from Rep. Jim Oberstar (MN), Chair of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, because they favored four states in the way funds were distributed. California is one of those four states and will receive $278 million of the $932 million going to those states. Oberstar dropped his objection after Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (NV) assured him that his concerns would be addressed in subsequent legislation.

Because of the House changes to comply with Pay-Go, the bill must go back to the Senate for a vote. The Senate originally passed the bill, 70-28, on Feb. 24, waiving the Pay-Go rules.

NATURAL DISASTERS: HOUSE PASSES EARTHQUAKE HAZARDS REDUCTION BILL

The House passed H.R. 3820 by a vote of 335-50 on March 2, reauthorizing the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program. The bill authorizes $751.5 million in funding through fiscal year 2014. The previous authorization bill, passed in 2004, authorized over $880 million over five years.

The program coordinates federal research efforts to mitigate earthquake damage and establishes research opportunities into technologies to improve construction to resist earthquake damage. It also provides education on preparedness for local governments to improve responses to earthquakes. Funding authorized under the bill goes to the following agencies, as allocated: $371.6 million for the U. S. Geological Survey; $286.3 million for the National Science Foundation; $54.4 million for the Federal Emergency
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Management Agency; and $39.2 million for the National Institute of Standards and Technology. The bill also authorizes $136.7 million through fiscal 2014 for the National Windstorm Hazards Reduction Program.

**Information Technology: Judiciary Looks At Internet Freedom & Sovereign Interference**

The Senate Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Law held a hearing on March 2, 2010, entitled "Global Internet Freedom and the Rule of Law. Witnesses were: Michael H. Posner, Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State; Daniel J. Weitzner, Associate Administrator for the Office of Policy Analysis and Development, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce; Nicole Wong, Vice President and Deputy General Counsel, Google Inc.; Rebecca MacKinnon, Visiting Fellow at the Center for Information Technology Policy, Princeton University; and Omid Memarian, Iranian Blogger, San Francisco, CA.

The hearing focused on the scale and scope of internet censorship by repressive governments and the responses of the U.S. government and information technology companies to this censorship. During his opening remarks, Chairman Richard Durbin (IL) expressed his disappointment that several information technology companies, both in the software and hardware sectors, had chosen not to testify at the hearing.

Some of the issues discussed at the hearing included:
- the repressive steps taken by such countries as China and Iran to prevent its citizens from gaining unfettered access to the Internet;
- Google’s response to the Chinese government’s censorship of its search engine, its decision to pull out of China because of that censorship, and its timeframe for withdrawal;
- The State Department’s efforts to ensure Internet freedom and the launching of the NetFreedom Taskforce to advance Internet freedom through expanded access to the Internet; monitor Internet freedom; and respond to threats to Internet freedom.
- The role of private corporations in preventing repressive governments from limiting free speech and access to the Internet, and whether their efforts should be voluntary or legislatively mandated; and
- the Global Network Initiative (GNI), a code of conduct for free expression and privacy in the Information, Communications and Technology sector, whose membership includes human rights groups, socially responsible investors and academics.

For more information on the hearing, go to:

**Environment: Committee Discusses Amendments to Clean Air Act**

On March 4, 2010, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, chaired by Sen. Barbara Boxer, held a hearing on S. 2995, which would amend the Clean Air Act to establish a national uniform multiple air pollutant regulatory program for the electric generating sector. Witnesses included: Regina McCarthy, Assistant Administrator, Office of Air and Radiation at the United States Environmental Protection Agency; Albert A. Rizzo M.D., on behalf of the American Lung Association; Michael D. Durham Ph.D., President ADA-ES, Inc.; Collin P. O'Mara,
The bill would place caps on sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides and requires that toxic mercury levels be cut. For sulfur dioxide, the bill caps emissions at 3.5 million tons in 2012, 2 million tons in 2015, and 1.5 million tons in 2018. For nitrogen oxides, the bill caps emissions in the eastern United States at 1.39 million tons in 2012 and 1.3 million tons in 2015. In the West, the cap limits emissions to 520,000 tons in 2012 and 320,000 tons in 2015. It grants the EPA the authority to set tighter limits if needed to protect public health or the environment. The mercury provision serves as a backstop for the forthcoming mercury Maximum Achievable Control Technology (MACT) rule. If EPA fails to implement the MACT or is blocked from implementing the rule, the bill will require U.S. plants to cut mercury emissions by 90 percent by 2015. The bill is not intended to change or weaken the underlying Clean Air Act, and EPA and the states would retain their enforcement authorities.

Witnesses were generally supportive of the legislation. Michael Durham urged the committee to include flexibility in the regulations and John McManus raised concerns about cumulative costs, immediate deadlines, the risk of stranded investments, lack of coordination between programs, impacts to grid, and the significant investments that may be required by non-air environmental programs.

More information can be found at: [http://epw.senate.gov](http://epw.senate.gov).

**HEALTH: WITNESSES URGE COMMITTEE TO IMPROVE CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO QUALITY NUTRITION**

On March 2, 2010, the House Education and Labor Committee, chaired by Rep. George Miller (Martinez), held a hearing on federal child nutrition programs. Witnesses included: Dora R. Rivas, President of the School Nutrition Association and the Executive Director of Food and Child Nutrition Services; Carolyn L. Morrison, President of the National Child and Adult Care Food Program Forum and the Chief Executive Officer of Child Development Services, Inc., Gresham, Oregon; Kiran Saluja, Deputy Director Public Health Foundation Enterprises, Inc., Irwindale, California; and Lucy Gettman, Director of Federal Programs, National School Boards Association Alexandria, Virginia.

Child obesity and hunger are both on the rise and witnesses and the committee discussed opportunities to help children be healthy and succeed in school by improving access to and the quality of the U.S. child nutrition programs and the Women Infants and Children (WIC) program. According to witnesses, providing children with access to healthy food during the critical years of early development, in childcare, at school and during the summer can help fight the childhood obesity epidemic and bolster students' achievement.

"Children who are served healthy and balanced meals are better poised for success in school and in life," said Chairman Miller. "Making sure children have access to the foods they need well before they enter kindergarten will be critical as we work to improve our federal child nutrition laws this year."

The school meal programs have the greatest reach of all the child nutrition programs. In over 100,000 schools across the country, more than 31 million children rely on the federal school meal programs each day. According to the committee, studies have shown that early access to good nutrition can have a positive effect on children's development and achievement. The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) reimburses program participants, such as child care centers, family child care homes, Head Start, after school programs and shelters for food and meal preparation costs, ongoing nutrition training and more. Each day, about three million children receive meals and snacks under the CACFP while in child care.

Witnesses and the committee also discussed WIC, which provides supplemental foods, health care referrals and nutrition education for low-income pregnant and breastfeeding women, and infants and children up to age five who are at a nutritional risk.

Witnesses highlighted the importance of healthy and nutritional meals in children's ability to learn and asked Congress to help improve children's access to the school meal programs and to support high quality nutrition. Witnesses also explained that low-income women who participate in WIC are more likely to breastfeed - setting their children on a path to lead healthier lives.
For more information about recent investments in child nutrition or to learn more about this hearing visit: http://edlabor.house.gov.

**TRANSPORTATION: SENATE COMMITTEE DISCUSSES TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS, THE ECONOMY AND JOBS**

On March 3, 2010, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, chaired by Sen. Barbara Boxer, held a hearing on transportation investments relative to the national economy and jobs. Witnesses and the Committee examined the ways transportation investment creates and preserves jobs and increases America's economic competitiveness.

According to the Department of Transportation (DOT) every $1 billion in Federal money for transportation that is matched by state and local funds supports approximately 34,700 jobs. According to a recent report by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), more than 280,000 direct jobs have been created or sustained at projects across the country as a result of the highway and transit funding in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

Chairwoman Boxer highlighted a Los Angeles facility where workers are providing preventive maintenance service to city buses through LA Metro's Bus Mid-Life Program - replacing engines and fuel cylinders, refurbishing interiors and wheelchair lifts, and repainting older buses to improve their safety, performance, and reliability. A federal investment of $47 million under ARRA has allowed this project to take place. "Transportation investments not only create and sustain jobs in the short term, they help us with economic recovery," said Chairwoman Boxer. "They also provide benefits to American families and businesses every day - including shortened travel and commuting times, increased productivity, and improved safety. Infrastructure investments also enhance the productivity of businesses and individuals by reducing disruptions that waste money, time, and fuel and undermine our competitiveness."

According to the Committee, this will be the first in a series of hearings to spotlight important areas of focus in the process of authorizing surface transportation programs.

More information can be found at: http://epw.senate.gov.

**R&D: HOUSE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, SECRETARY CHU DISCUSS FY 2011 R&D BUDGET**

On March 3, 2010, the House Committee on Science and Technology held a hearing to discuss the Administration's Fiscal Year 2011 budget request for energy research and technology development programs at the Department of Energy (DOE) with Secretary Steven Chu.

The FY 2011 budget request for the DOE is $28.4 billion, which represents a $1.8 billion or 6.8 percent increase over FY 2010. Approximately one-third of the total budget is allocated for civilian energy research and technology development programs within the Science and Technology Committee's jurisdiction.

The FY 2011 budget request for the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Energy (ARPA-E) is $299.9 million. ARPA-E was authorized in the 2007 America COMPETES Act (P.L. 110-69) to pursue high-risk, high-reward energy technology development. The agency was established in 2009 with $15 million from the Omnibus Appropriations Act and $400 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

The FY 2011 budget request for the DOE Office of Science is $5.1 billion. This represents an increase of $218 million or 4.4 percent over the FY 2010 enacted level of funding. Continuing the Office of Science on the doubling path set forth in the America COMPETES Act is a priority for the Committee. The budget request calls for $503 million for the Office of Nuclear Energy research and development, representing an increase of $37 million over the FY 2010 enacted funding level. The request cuts funding for Yucca Mountain, which has been the proposed site of the nation's permanent nuclear waste repository from 1987 until present. The president also recently announced the creation of a bipartisan Blue Ribbon Commission to offer recommendations on a path forward for long-term management of used nuclear fuel.
This was the third in a series of hearings the Committee is holding to examine the Administration's budget request. The Committee held hearings with the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy Director Dr. John P. Holdren on February 24th and NASA Administrator Charles F. Bolden, Jr. on February 25th. On March 10th, the Subcommittee on Research & Science Education will hold a hearing to examine the National Science Foundation's FY 2011 Budget Request, and the Full Committee will hold a hearing to examine Fiscal Year 2011 Research and Development Budget Proposals at EPA and NOAA.

For more information, please visit http://science.house.gov.

**EDUCATION: HOUSE COMMITTEE EXAMINED ROLE OF THE FEDERAL AGENCIES IN IMPROVING K-12 STEM EDUCATION, STEM LITERACY**

On March 4, 2010, the House Science and Technology Committee (Chairman Bart Gordon, Tenn.) held a hearing to receive testimony on innovative efforts to reform K-12 science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education, and the critical importance of K-12 STEM education to our nation's prosperity and economic competitiveness. In particular, in preparation for reauthorization of the America COMPETES Act, the Committee examined the role of Federal agencies in supporting improvements in K-12 STEM education and promoting STEM literacy.

Witnesses included: Ellen Futter, president, American Museum of Natural History; Gordon Gee, president, Ohio State University; and Jim Simons, founder and chairman, Math for America, Jeffrey Wadsworth, president and CEO, Battelle Memorial Institute.

According to the committee, President Obama's FY 2011 budget request invests $3.7 billion in STEM education programs across the Federal government, including $1 billion to improve STEM education among K-12 students, an increase of over 40 percent. Of that $1 billion, nearly half would be at the Department of Education: $300 million for the proposed Effective Teaching and Learning in STEM program, and $150 million through the Investing in Innovation (i3) program. The rest of the funding is spread across the Federal science agencies. All of the Federal science agencies fund a variety of programs and activities designed to improve K-12 STEM education. K-12 STEM education at NASA, the Department of Energy, NOAA, and the other mission agencies vary widely by type of program and target audience, with activities ranging from curriculum development and professional development opportunities for teachers, to age-appropriate field trips, online resources, research opportunities, and internships for elementary and secondary school students.

More information can be found at: http://science.house.gov.

**RESOURCES: WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT REVIEWED**

On March 3, 2010, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee (Chairman Oberstar, Minn.) held an oversight hearing titled "The Water Resources Development Act of 2007 (PL 110-114): A Review of Implementation in Its Third Year."

On November 8, 2007, Congress enacted WRDA 2007 over the veto of the President. Water resources development acts typically contain project authorizations, project modifications, and programmatic changes that affect how the Department of the Army's U.S. Corps of Engineers (Corps) plans, constructs, and operates and maintains water resources projects. Water resources projects may include projects that provide economic and environmental benefits associated with coastal and inland navigation, structural and nonstructural flood damage reduction, hurricane and storm damage reduction, environmental restoration and protection, water supply, recreation, and hydropower. WRDA 2007 contained authorizations for over 900 projects or programs. In addition to its project and program authorizations, WRDA 2007, according to the Committee, also included the most sweeping reforms of how the Department of the Army's Corps of Engineers develops and implements its projects and programs since the Water Resources Development Act of 1986.
The Committee released a report that highlights several of the Corps' shortcomings, with an emphasis on the key reform areas of strengthened mitigation, required independent review, and revisions to the planning principles and guidelines.

To obtain the report or for more information, go to: http://Transportation.house.gov.

TRADE: SENATE FINANCE HOLDS HEARING ON 2010 TRADE AGENDA

On March 3, 2010, the Senate Finance Committee held a hearing to examine the Administration’s 2010 Trade Agenda. Ambassador Ron Kirk, United States Trade Representative, testified for the Administration.

Ambassador Kirk stated that as the Administration works to pull the United States out of the recession, it will focus on an economy that creates opportunities for job growth at home, and for Americans to compete and succeed around the globe. “A strong trade policy leads to good jobs, fair prices, and increased consumer choices,” Kirk said. “This year’s Trade Policy Agenda,” he said, “outlines the Administration’s commitment to the rules-based trading system, our dedication to enforcing America’s rights, and our plan to advance U.S. economic interests by negotiating new market-opening agreements and resolving issues with pending free trade agreements. Taken together, these elements will stimulate export-driven growth and help the United States meet the President’s goal to double U.S. exports in five years – an increase that could support two million additional American jobs.”

Kirk testified that approval of the FTAs South Korea, Panama and Colombia were a high priority for the Administration and it is working to resolve outstanding issues so that it can move forward.

Ambassador Kirk’s testimony and an archive of the hearing can be found at: