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DECEMBER 27 - 31: THIS WEEK

The House and Senate have adjourned sine die and will convene for the 112th Congress on January 5, 2011.

Defense

The House cleared a long-delayed fiscal 2011 defense authorization bill Wednesday, December 22, sending the measure to President Obama after the Senate stripped out a controversial provision related to Guam. The Senate passed the amended version of **HR 6523, the Ike Skelton National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal**

Year 2011 by unanimous consent. The amendment offered by the leaders of the Senate Armed Services Committee removed a provision that would have authorized up to \$100 million for victims who suffered atrocities committed by the Japanese forces that occupied Guam during World War II.

Energy/Environment/Climate Change

The incoming Republican House leadership unveiled plans Thursday, December 16, to reorganize the **Energy and Commerce Committee** by splitting the **Energy and Environment Subcommittee** and giving control of Clean Air Act issues to **Rep. Edward Whitfield (R-Ky.)** a Republican from Kentucky's coal-mining region.

and state-level grant and loan program aimed at reducing diesel emissions. that would reauthorize a diesel emissions reduction program for five years. The amended measure **HR 5809, the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act of 2010**, allows for the retrofitting of old diesel engines to reduce their pollutant output. Advocates say the measure is one of the more cost-effective federal programs. The Senate passed the bill by unanimous consent on Thursday, December 16.

Sen. John D. Rockefeller IV (D-W.Va.) said Thursday, December 16, that he will try to force the Senate to take up his plan for a two-year moratorium on greenhouse gas regulations as an amendment to the omnibus spending bill. Rockefeller has predicted for months that he could produce 60 votes for his bill **S 3072, the Stationary Source Regulations Delay Act** to suspend EPA regulatory authority over greenhouse gas emissions. But the procedural move he is threatening would require 67 votes to waive Senate rules. Rockefeller's long-shot bid comes ahead of EPA regulations for greenhouse gases and power plants and large emitters that are scheduled to take effect January 2, 2011.

The Senate, by unanimous consent, cleared legislation Tuesday, December 21, that would exempt external power supplies for security and life-safety products, including smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, from certain federal energy efficiency requirements. **HR 5470**, which the House passed December 8, by voice vote, would amend the **Energy Policy and Conservation Act** to exclude external power supplies that are manufactured before July 1, 2017, certified by the **Energy Department** as being designed to connect to a security or life-safety alarm or surveillance system, and meet other requirements from "No-Load Mode" energy standards.

The House passed a measure by voice vote on Tuesday, December 21 that would reauthorize a voluntary national

Health Care

Congress on Wednesday, December 22, cleared for the president a pared-back bill to provide health care and compensation to people exposed to toxic material at Ground Zero after September 11. In the final hours of the 111th Congress, first the Senate and then the House passed the \$4.2 billion measure, the Senate by voice

vote and the House by a vote of 206-60. The final version of **HR 847, the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act of 2010** whittled the cost of the \$6.2 billion measure down to \$4.2 billion, reduced its time frame to five years and removed a fee on some foreign tourists that was one of its funding mechanisms.

Immigration

On December 18, the Senate voted, 55-41, against moving to an up-or-down vote on a House-passed bill that would provide a path to legalization for hundreds of thousands of young adults brought illegally to the U.S. as children. The 60 votes were needed to limit debate. **HR 5281, the DREAM Act** would give adults under 30 who have been in

the U.S. for at least five years the chance to obtain green cards and then citizenship if they attend college or join the U.S. military. Under the bill, applicants would have to pay fees, meet certain requirements and wait 10 years before qualifying for a green card.

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Insurance

On Thursday, December 16, **Representative Dennis Moore (D-Kan.)** introduced **HR 6529, the Federal License for Reinsurers Act of 2010**. The legislation would create a federal license for national reinsurers that would be administered by the director of the new **Federal Insurance Office**. The bill is supported by the **Reinsurance Association of America (RAA)**, the leading trade association of property and casualty reinsurers doing business in the U.S. According to the RAA, the Federal License for Reinsurers Act of 2010 promotes compatible international standards for regulating reinsurers, which would strengthen global efforts to monitor financial stability and support a competitive reinsurance marketplace. It has been reported that Representative Moore is retiring and it is unclear if there is a bill sponsor lined up for the next Congress.

The bill would provide special standing for designated state government officials to dispute regulations issued by agencies attempting to implement new federal laws or presidential executive orders. Under the legislation, any rule proposed by a federal agency would be subject to constitutional challenges if certain state officials determine the rule infringes on powers reserved to the states under the 10th Amendment. According to Senator Wicker, 43 states are currently challenging parts of the federal health care law in court because of the mandates on both states and individuals. The legislation would give state officials another tool at their disposal to dispute the unconstitutional overreach of the federal government

Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.) introduced the **Restoring the 10th Amendment Act, S. 4020** on Thursday, December 9.

Tax

House Democrats were back on track Thursday evening, December 16, to hold a series of votes on the tax cut compromise. House leaders plan to modify an earlier rule to allow for separate votes on the measure's estate tax language, followed by final passage of the legislation, **HR 4853, the Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance**

Reauthorization and Job Creation Act of 2010. The change came after frustrated liberals made it clear they want a more direct opportunity to register their opposition to the bill, which the Senate overwhelmingly passed on Wednesday, December 15.

Telecommunications

On December 18, the Senate cleared a measure that could result in an increase in the number of community radio stations that are allowed to operate. The chamber cleared **HR 6533, the Local Community Radio Act of 2010** by unanimous consent, sending the measure to the president.

The House passed the bill on December 17, by voice vote. The bill would effectively let low-power FM operate three "clicks" away from full-power FM stations while keeping current restrictions for stations that are two "clicks" away or closer. The measure would allow for certain waivers.

Trade

The House on Wednesday, December 22, passed wide-ranging legislation that would extend several expiring trade agreements and dozens of tariffs as well as expand an assistance program for workers who lose their jobs to overseas competition. **HR 6517, the Omnibus Trade Act of 2010**, passed by voice vote, would extend tariff preference programs for Colombia and Ecuador under the **Andean Trade Preferences Act** through February 12, 2011. The

programs, set to expire December 31, were last extended in December 2009. The legislation would extend for 6 weeks the **Trade Adjustment Assistance** program, created in 1974 to assist workers who are laid off or whose hours of work and wages are reduced as a result of increased imports. Earlier Wednesday, the Senate passed the bill by unanimous consent after stripping out hundreds of tariff provisions that the House had included in its original version of the package.

Transportation and Infrastructure

The Senate cleared another short-term extension of the **Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)** on Saturday, December 18, punting the issue into the 112th Congress. The measure, which cleared by unanimous consent, would extend aviation taxes and the authority to spend money

from the Airport and Airway Trust Fund through March 31, 2011. The FAA has operated without a long-term reauthorization since the end of fiscal 2007, when the **Vision 100-Century of Aviation Reauthorization Act** expired.