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## JULY 26-30, 2010: THIS WEEK

The Senate reconvened on Monday, July 26, and is expected to vote this week on a motion to proceed to a campaign spending bill, the DISCLOSE Act. **Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.)** hopes to introduce a modest energy package to the floor this week and Republicans also are expected to introduce an oil spill substitute bill.

The House also reconvened on Monday, July 26, and is expected to vote this week on the first of the FY11 appropriations bills and an amended war supplemental from the Senate.

## Banking/Financial Services

On Thursday, July 22, the Senate passed an amendment that added a \$30 billion Treasury lending fund to a small business jobs bill. The amendment passed with unanimous support from Senate Democrats

as well as **Sens. George LeMieux (R-Fla.)** and **George Voinovich (R-Ohio)**. Democrats now hope to pass the underlying small business bill before the recess.

## Energy/Environment/Climate Change

Majority Leader Reid abandoned efforts on Thursday, July 22, to take up energy and climate legislation before the August recess due to lack of GOP support. It is still to be determined whether Reid will devote floor time to **Sen. John Rockefeller's (D-Wash.)** amendment to delay EPA's regulatory power over carbon emissions for two years before the recess.

**Research and Development Act, and H.R. 2693, the Oil Pollution Research and Development Program Reauthorization Act of 2010**, to promote safer deep-water drilling technologies and improve cleanup responses to future spills. H.R. 2693 will provide more funding for federal research into new technologies to prevent and respond to oil spills. The bill will authorize \$48 million each year, more than double the current \$22 million, for the **Interagency Oil Spill Research and Development Program**.

On Wednesday, July 21, the House passed by voice vote a pair of bills, **H.R. 5716, the Safer Oil and Natural Gas Drilling Technology**

## Health Care

On Tuesday, July 20, the **House Ways and Means Health Subcommittee** held a hearing to discuss the electronic health records regulations of the Health Care Bill. **Rep. Wally Herger (R-Calif.)**

voiced his concern about the **Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)** easing prescription drug requirements to 40 percent of prescriptions for electronic records, as compared

## Health Care (cont'd.)

to 75 percent in the interim rule. Members also discussed the need to expand technology infrastructure in rural areas and pushed for multi-campus hospitals to be eligible for individual grants. CMS's Tony Trenkle defended the decision by stating that limiting the grants to one hospital system was a result of remaining consistent with current Medicare practices.

**Rep. Lynn Woolsey (D-Calif.)** introduced legislation on Thursday, July 22, to establish a government-run "public option." She believes that her bill, which currently has 125 co-sponsors, will help cut the deficit and save money. Woolsey does not expect the bill to pass during this Congress but wants a public option to be available for discussion in the future.

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## Immigration

Majority Leader Reid stated the week of July 19, that the Senate may soon vote on the **S. 729, the Development, Relief and Education for Minors (DREAM) Act**, which would give young immigrants a chance at citizenship if they attend college or serve in the military. However, since many Democrats are in favor of a more comprehensive immigration overhaul, Reid promised not to vote on the bill until he believes it impossible to move forward on a complete overhaul.

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## Insurance

It has been reported that Michael McRaith, director of the Illinois Department of Insurance, is believed to be among the candidates to head the newly established **Federal Insurance Office (FIO)** within the **Treasury Department**. Administration officials have not set a timeline for filling the position. The FIO is authorized to gather information about the insurance industry, monitor the insurance industry for systemic risk purposes and serve as a uniform national voice on insurance matters for the U.S. on the international stage.

In the Statement of Administration Policy issued last week, the Obama Administration stated its opposition to **H.R. 1264, the Multiple Peril Insurance Act**, which would expand the Federal Government's role to provide windstorm insurance that is already available in the private sector and through State insurance plans without Federal aid. The Statement asserts that although the Administration believes in strengthening the **National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)**, expanding NFIP to cover windstorm insurance would unnecessarily duplicate available insurance products and would "crowd out" such products where they are offered, while offering little to no savings to the American public. On Friday, July 23, HR 1264 sponsored by **Rep. Gene Taylor (D-Miss.)**, was pulled off the floor in the House before a vote could be taken.

## Labor, Pensions & Retirements

**President Obama** signed legislation on Thursday, July 22, that will extend unemployment benefits for people who have been out of work for six months or more. The House approved the measure earlier in the day and the Senate passed the measure on Wednesday, July 21. The legislation will extend eligibility for federal jobless benefits through November 30.

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## Telecommunications

On Wednesday, July 21, **Senate Commerce Chairman John Rockefeller** announced plans to introduce legislation that would require the **Federal Communications Commission (FCC)** to set aside the D-block to help create an interoperable communications network. His bill provides public safety organizations with an additional 10 megahertz of spectrum.

**Sens. Joe Lieberman (D-Conn.) and John McCain (R-Ariz.)** also introduced on, July 21, a bill that would prevent the FCC from auctioning off the spectrum. The Lieberman-McCain bill would establish two grant programs totaling \$11 billion to help public safety organizations build and maintain an interoperable network.

On Thursday, July 22, **Rep. Rick Boucher (D-Va.)**, introduced a bill that would expand the Universal Service Fund to include support for broadband service and require the FCC to develop a cost model to calculate high-cost support that includes the cost of providing both voice and broadband services. The bill has support from a variety of telecommunication firms including AT&T and Verizon.

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## Insurance (cont'd.)

The **House Agriculture Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management** held a hearing on Thursday, July 22, to review current issues facing the U.S. crop insurance industry. The **Department of Agriculture** and crop insurance companies recently renegotiated the **Standard Reinsurance Agreement (SRA)** for the 2011 crop year. In testimony on behalf of the **Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America**, it was noted that the current SRA represents the first time that the **Risk Management Agency (RMA)**, or any federal

agency, has attempted to regulate crop insurance commissions rather than allow the marketplace to determine the appropriate commission rate. The Association strongly opposes the new SRA's commission cap provisions. William Murphy, testifying on behalf of the RMA, stated that the new SRA includes a cap on agent commissions to ensure that companies have sufficient funds to pay the other operating expenses in years in which there may not be an underwriting gain.

## Trade

On Wednesday, July 20, the House passed **H.R. 4380, United States Manufacturing Enhancement Act of 2010**, which will extend many expired tariff suspensions and put in place new tariff breaks on a variety of imported items. The amended version of the bill would offset the revenue losses associated with the tariff suspensions with a provision extending customs user fees. **House Speaker Nancy Pelosi** believes the bill will lower costs for American businesses and increase the competitiveness our products.

Also on Wednesday, July 20, the **House Energy and Commerce Committee** approved **H.R. 4678, Foreign Manufacturers Legal Accountability Act of 2010**, which would require foreign manufacturers who import to the U.S. to establish registered agents who could receive notice of lawsuits filed against the manufacturers. The National Association of Manufacturers, as well several Republican members, oppose the measure and believe that it could violate current international agreements.

## Transportation

Senators negotiated an aviation bill the week of July 19, to increase the cap on landing fees that airports can charge as part of a plane ticket. The current cap is \$4.50 per flight and the **Senate Committee on Commerce,**

**Science, and Transportation** is negotiating to raise the cap to \$5.50. **Sen. John Rockefeller (D-Wash.)** had hoped to have the bill on the floor soon but negotiations continue on the details of this FAA bill.