



**111<sup>th</sup> Congress, Second Session**  
**April 19, 2010**

**Extenders Bill Passage**

On Thursday, April 15<sup>th</sup> the Senate passed the *Continuing Extension Act of 2010*, HR 4851, 59-38, after overcoming Republican efforts to offset the bill's cost. In addition to extending expanded unemployment benefits, the short-term legislation extends COBRA health insurance subsidies for many unemployed while offering higher payments for physicians who treat Medicare patients. It also extends the national flood insurance program and uses '09 poverty guidelines for federal programs.

All would be extended through the end of May, except the unemployment benefits, which would last until June 2<sup>nd</sup>. The measure also would provide back pay to workers who were furloughed because of a lapse in the Highway Trust Fund, and would extend satellite TV transmission laws. The short-term extension package is designed to buy time for House and Senate negotiators to reach a deal on HR 4213, ***the American Workers, State, and Business Relief Act of 2010*** extending benefits and programs until December 31, 2010.

Ending weeks of partisan back and forth, the House on Thursday cleared a package of short-term extensions of several federal programs — including unemployment benefits — that lapsed recently, with the president signing the measure later in the evening.

**Climate Change Legislation**

It is expected that legislation addressing climate change, carbon-pricing mechanisms and mandatory emissions limits will be introduced this week, perhaps coinciding with Earth Day. Senators Kerry, Lieberman and Graham have led the efforts to draft legislation; however, it is unclear whether the Senate bill will closely align with already-passed legislation from the House.

Nearly thirty senators have maintained that they are undecided about climate change legislation. The President, however, has been firm in his commitment to its passage.

The EPA released its Endangerment Findings earlier in 2010, giving the Agency the ability to regulate greenhouse gases, although Congress has expressed their position that only *they* should have the power to regulate greenhouse gases. This position may drive the passage of the legislation. Consumers may also increase demand for the legislation as we head in to the summer months, with electrical blackouts and brownouts.

Hopefully, action will occur on the legislation prior to the summer break, since controversial items operate within small windows of opportunity.

**Clean Water Legislation**

Commissioner Jacobs has been invited by Chairman Oberstar to represent counties, nationally, and participate in a press rally to unveil Clean Water Legislation, on April 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Large Urban County Caucus Fly-In**

Commissioner Lieberman, as Chair of LUCC, led a group of local government leaders from across the nation in two days of Capitol Hill, Agency and White House meetings. The Fly-In opened with a press rally on the Capitol grounds to express the need for intergovernmental cooperation to be reestablished through the ***Restore the Partnership Act, HR 3332***. The legislation aims to ensure that Congress, federal agencies, state agencies and local governments are represented on a formal council of intergovernmental relations, proactively discussing matters of mutual interest.



On Thursday, the group was invited to a White House briefing to discuss LUCC priorities with representatives of the Departments of Agriculture, Transportation, Energy, Environmental Protection, Health & Human Services, and Housing & Urban Development. Members of the White House Office of Urban Affairs and Intergovernmental Affairs were also present at the event, which lasted nearly three hours and covered topics as varied as “food deserts” to Transportation Reauthorization efforts.



### **FMAP Extension**

The State of Florida is waiting anxiously to hear about whether the federal Medicaid match percentage or FMAP, will be extended beyond the December 31, 2010 provided for in the stimulus bill. State governments across the country are warning that the pressure on their budgets may get worse next year, possibly leading to layoffs and cuts in services. States like Florida, already nervous that an overhaul of the health care system will push up their Medicaid costs, look to FMAP increases to ease their budget woes. In addition, if unemployment remains high, it will take awhile for states to stop losing revenue and for Medicaid rolls to return to pre-recession levels.

The stimulus (ARRA) provided states with a sizeable amount of assistance, including \$86.6 billion for Medicaid and a \$53.6 billion “fiscal stabilization fund” meant mostly for education programs, but advocates of state aid are warning more will be needed. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, which closely follows state fiscal policies, estimates that the shortfall in state budgets could go from \$178 billion in 2010 to \$180 billion in fiscal 2011 and \$120 billion in fiscal 2012. If states lay off workers or cut back services, it will counter whatever stimulus policies are put in place by the federal government. Many in the minority party argue that additional aid to states will only add to the mounting and unsustainable debt load.

The Florida Senate has built nearly \$800 million of its budget on the expectation of at least a six-month extension of FMAP, running through the end of the 2011 state fiscal year. The US House is poised to take up the Senate bill, which includes the FMAP extension, in the near future, allowing the Florida Senate to move ahead with budget negotiations.

### **Deutch Sworn in to Congress**

Democrat Ted Deutch, previously Florida State Senator, became the newest member of Congress on Thursday. Rep. Deutch said he will focus on creating jobs, helping senior citizens get increased Social Security and putting economic pressure on Iran to prevent development of nuclear weapons. He expressed a desire to push for government loans to small businesses so they can grow and hire more workers.

### **Financial Overhaul Bill - Update**

Legislation to overhaul the country's financial regulatory system continues to advance in the Senate, even though all 41 Senate Republicans signed a letter to Sen. Majority Leader Reid stating their opposition. The bill, approved by the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee could come to the floor this week. It includes more regulation of derivatives and significantly improves transparency and accountability. President Obama has been lobbying heavily on the issue and argued that this overhaul is the only way to prevent taxpayers from having to pay for the failure of large financial institutions in the future.