

NATIONAL COMMODITY SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD PROGRAM ASSOCIATION

EDUCATION COMMITTEE UPDATE

Below please find an Education update from NCSFPA's Education Committee Consultant Roger Szemraj.

Farm Bill – The House is not going to move a traditional Farm Bill. That is because there is widespread belief that there would be even more cuts proposed – and approved – that had already been made by the House Agriculture Committee. Many of these cuts would focus on the SNAP program.

The House this Wednesday is going to take up a bill that provides a one year extension of the existing farm bill, and also includes some disaster assistance provisions. It is likely that this bill will come up under a closed rule, meaning that no amendments may be offered to the bill. The idea is that passage of this bill will be a device for the House and Senate to go to conference, using the Senate-passed Farm Bill as the base, and the House Committee-reported Farm Bill as the House position. Staff could begin work on conferencing the bill over the long recess which begins at close of business this Friday. The House and Senate are the same on CSFP, so we may not have much to worry about. But in this atmosphere it is always best to be prepared. The hope would be that a conference report would be achievable so that it could be voted on in September. Whether or not that is likely remains to be seen.

Appropriations – Despite the fact that the Senate Appropriations Committee reported their Agriculture bill at the end of April, and that the House Appropriations Committee reported its bill at the end of June, there has not been an ability to get the bill to the floor for consideration. Instead, there are increasing reports that House and Senate leadership is interested in passing a six-month Continuing Resolution.

That would push the final action into the new Congress, with some believing that there could be a Republican majority in the Senate, or at least a slimmer Democratic majority that would make the Senate more amenable to the larger budget cuts that many in the House would like to see.

And, of course, there are some who want to see the results of the election because they believe that if there is a Romney administration that the likelihood of further budget cuts increases.

There are others, perhaps more on the Democratic side, who believe that Congress has to deal with an alternative to budget sequestration after the election. They believe that reaching agreement will be difficult, and that all attention needs to be focused on it. So battles over appropriation bills in November/December would not be helpful in the scheme of things.

Having a six month CR has its pluses and minuses. The biggest – and perhaps only real plus – is that it is more orderly than getting into a series of short term CRs. The minuses include the inability to plan for the full year, and the likelihood that any cuts will be magnified by the fact that they will have to be absorbed in only six months rather than over the course of a full year. And another unknown is what kind of budget reductions might have to be imposed in order to get agreement for a six month CR. That is a key issue for September.