

CONGRESS CONTINUES WORK ON CONTINUING RESOLUTION AS DEADLINE LOOMS

Congress is making the final push to approve a continuing resolution before the fiscal year ends on September 30, 2016. On Tuesday, September 20th, the Senate agreed to move to consideration of a measure that would keep the federal government functioning under current spending levels until December 9, 2016. This is necessary to allow Congress to complete work on Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) spending bills. Even though both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees have completed work on all the FY17 spending bills, not a single appropriations measure has been approved by both chambers and sent to the White House for the President's signature.

Although the Senate has made some progress on the temporary spending measure, differences remain over funding levels to combat the Zika virus and provide assistance for the flooding in the Southeast. Additional, members of Congress are debating whether to include funds to address lead-contaminated waters in Flint, MI.

The Senate could vote on the continuing resolution the afternoon of Tuesday, September 27th, but the two sides will need to resolve their differences to ensure passage of the measure. Should the Senate approve the bill, the House is currently operating under modified rules that will allow for expedited consideration and approval of the bill.

VOLUNTEER RESPONDER INCENTIVE PROTECTION ACT ADVANCES IN SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

On September 21, 2016, the Senate Finance Committee unanimously approved legislation preserving incentives for volunteer firefighters and EMS personnel. Provisions from S. 609, the Volunteer Responder Incentive Protection Act (VRIPA), were included in the Retirement Enhancement and Savings Act, legislation the committee considered and approved.

S. 609, which was introduced by Senators Charles Schumer (NY) and Susan Collins (ME), exempts from federal income tax any property tax benefit, and up to \$600 per year of any other type of benefit, that a state or local unit of government provides to volunteer emergency responders as a recruitment or retention incentive. Congressman John Larson (CT-1) introduced H.R. 2752, companion legislation to S. 609, on June 12, 2015.

HOUSE COMMITTEE APPROVES THE PROTECTING ACCESS TO EMERGENCY MEDICATIONS ACT

On September 21, 2016, the House Energy and Commerce Committee unanimously approved H.R. 4365, the Protecting Patient Access to Emergency Medications Act. The legislation, introduced by Congressman Richard Hudson (NC-8), amends the Controlled Substances Act to allow EMS providers to continue dispensing controlled substances under standing orders. Earlier this year, CFSI's National Advisory Committee approved a resolution calling on CFSI to endorse the legislation.

Senator Bill Cassidy (LA) introduced companion legislation, S. 2932, in the Senate on May 16, 2016.