



FEDERAL UPDATE

April 2017

The Report on Congressional & Administration Activities

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WASHINGTON UPDATE

On March 16, President Donald Trump released his “skinny” budget outline for Fiscal Year (FY) 2018, titled “[America First: A Budget Blueprint to Make America Great Again](#).” The proposal seeks to increase defense spending by \$54 billion, to be offset by steep reductions in funding for non-defense programs. The White House is expected to release a more comprehensive budget proposal later this spring. On March 24, University of California (UC) President Janet Napolitano sent a letter to the California congressional delegation expressing UC’s concerns about the FY 2018 Budget Blueprint and sharing the [university’s FY 2018 appropriations priorities](#). This document will serve as UC’s roadmap throughout the FY 2018 budget and appropriations process. Additionally, UC’s Office of Federal Governmental Relations

(FGR) is still closely monitoring the current FY 2017 Continuing Resolution (CR), which is set to expire on April 28. Additional information is included below.

In March, the Senate Judiciary Committee began hearings on the nomination of Neil Gorsuch to be an associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. On April 3, the Committee voted to move the nomination to the full Senate. Sen. Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) has expressed his desire to move the nomination to the floor shortly thereafter. Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), a member of the Judiciary Committee, and Sen. Kamala Harris (D-CA) have both announced that they will oppose the nomination. Democrats are expected to attempt to filibuster the nomination.

Confirmation hearings for President Trump’s cabinet nominees began on Jan. 11 and two cabinet level nominees – for the Departments of Labor and Agriculture – still await confirmation. The status of the remaining cabinet-level nominees is included below.

March included many advocacy events that FGR helped to coordinate and participate in, including: multiple UC student advocacy visits, Council for Agricultural Research, Extension and Teaching (CARET) Advocacy Day, Humanities Advocacy Day and UCLA’s participation in a House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development, of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, hearing. Details about each of these advocacy activities are below.

BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS

The federal government is operating under a Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 Continuing Resolution (CR) until April 28. It remains unclear whether Congress and President Trump will enact a detailed package of “regular” appropriations before then, or choose to extend the CR with limited funding and policy changes to the previous year’s law – for a limited period or through the end of the fiscal year.

On March 16, President Trump released his budget outline for FY 2018, titled “[America First: A Budget Blueprint to Make America Great Again](#).” The proposal seeks to increase defense spending by \$54 billion, to be offset by steep reductions in funding for non-defense programs. It would break the principle of parity in funding between defense and non-defense discretionary programs that was established by the Budget Control Act (BCA) of 2011. The White House is expected to send its full budget request to Congress by May.

Independent of the President’s FY 2018 budget proposal, defense and non-defense discretionary spending caps would fall in FY 2018 under current law. After two years of partial relief enacted under the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015, the full impact of the lower BCA sequestration caps returns for FY 2018. New changes to the underlying BCA budget law would have to be enacted to alter the overall FY 2018 discretionary spending cap (\$1.064 trillion), and to revise the caps for the defense and non-defense categories as proposed by the President.

Budget and Appropriations Advocacy

In coordination with our campus and lab colleagues, FGR transmitted the [university’s FY 2018 appropriations priorities](#) on March 24. The document highlights the programs and agencies that are of priority to the university, along with requested funding levels. This detailed document was distributed to all members of the California congressional delegation, under a letter from UC President Napolitano, and will be used throughout the year in UC’s advocacy efforts with Congress.

Additionally, FGR urged California House members to sign a number of Dear Colleague letters with FY 2018 funding recommendations for some agencies and programs of importance to the university, including: National Institutes of Health; National Science Foundation; Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Science and the National Nuclear Security Administration National Ignition Facility; DOE ARPA-E, Energy Innovation Hubs and Energy Frontier Research Centers; NOAA Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research; NOAA National Sea Grant Program; Department of Education Title VI Fulbright-Hays International Education and Foreign Language Programs; National Endowment for the Humanities; Health and Human Services Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality; and the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

FGR continues to advocate, in partnership with our campus and lab colleagues, for the university’s research, education and health care priorities throughout the budget and appropriations processes. For additional information, please contact Marjorie Duske at Marjorie.Duske@ucdc.edu or 202-974-6306; Carolyn Henrich at Carolyn.Henrich@ucdc.edu or 202-974-6308; or Julie Clements at Julie.Clements@ucdc.edu or 202-974-6309.

CONGRESSIONAL LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

Efforts to Repeal Affordable Care Act Coverage Provisions

On Friday, March 24, House of Representatives leadership pulled [H.R. 1628](#), the American Health Care Act (AHCA), the House Republicans' measure to repeal coverage provisions of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), from its previously scheduled vote. A mix of moderate and conservative Republican House members, along with House Democrats, opposed the AHCA legislation, guaranteeing the legislation would not pass.

UC FGR sent a note to all members of the California delegation before the scheduled March 24 vote stating its opposition to the legislation and urging members to vote no.

With the introduction of drafts of what would eventually be known as the AHCA, UC expressed concern about the impact of the legislation's proposed changes to Medicaid, which could result in loss of coverage for UC patients, the unraveling of significant gains in patient access to coordinated care and ultimately, higher costs for America's health care system. The AHCA would have allowed the following actions to occur, adversely impacting UC and its patients:

- Restructuring Medicaid delivery by providing states with the option of using block grants and per capita caps versus maintaining the ACA's federal and state partnership;
- Repealing the Medicaid expansion and ending a state's option to extend Medicaid coverage to adults meeting expansion eligibility criteria as of December 31, 2017;
- Penalizing Medicaid expansion states by cutting their Medicaid uncompensated care funds in FYs 2018 and 2019;
- Reducing federal assistance that has allowed 1.5 million low-income Californians to purchase private health insurance coverage; and
- Allowing states control over what constitutes essential health benefits.

As detailed in a March 13 [letter and principles document from the university](#) to the California delegation, passage of the AHCA would have significantly reduced health insurance coverage in California and challenged UC medical centers' capacity to serve as safety net institutions. By maintaining cuts to uncompensated care funds while simultaneously reducing coverage, if enacted, the AHCA would have undermined UC medical centers' ability to care for the nation's most vulnerable patients, maintain their commitment to educating the next generation of physicians and support pioneering biomedical research that generates life-saving cures, as well as advances in quality and efficiency that lower costs. Also on March 13, UC Health, in coordination with FGR, issued a [statement](#) outlining its concerns with the legislation.

UC stands ready to continue to work with Congress on legislation that will promote the continuation of comprehensive health care coverage while preserving the capacity of UC medical centers to serve as safety nets for the sickest and most vulnerable populations. UC continues to monitor congressional activity and rules emanating from the federal agencies, aware that federal agencies are empowered to issue regulatory guidance that could weaken the ACA's coverage provisions. For additional information, please contact Julie Clements at Julie.Clements@ucdc.edu or 202-974-6309.

Honest and Open New EPA Science Treatment Act

On March 29, the House passed [H.R. 1430](#), the Honest and Open New EPA Science Treatment (HONEST) Act of 2017 on a party-line vote. The bill is virtually identical to the Secret Science

Reform Act introduced in previous Congresses, and is widely opposed by the research community due to restrictions it places on the use of EPA-funded science in the formulation of environmental policy. UC joined several of its peer institutions in signing a [letter](#) requesting that the unintended consequences of the bill be addressed. For additional information, please contact Marjorie Duske at Marjorie.Duske@ucdc.edu or (202) 974-6306, or Chris Carter at Chris.Carter@ucdc.edu or (202) 974-6310.

NASA Transition Authorization Act

On March 22, President Trump signed the [National Aeronautics and Space Administration \(NASA\) Transition Authorization Act of 2017](#), the first comprehensive NASA authorization passed by Congress in more than six years. The bipartisan legislation authorizes all NASA programs, including science, technology and aeronautics portfolios through FY 2017. For additional information, please contact Chris Carter at Chris.Carter@ucdc.edu or (202) 974-6310.

Cabinet Nominations (as of March 30)

On March 13, the Senate voted 55-43 to confirm **Semma Verma** to be administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Sens. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Kamala Harris (D-CA) voted against the nomination.

On March 14, **Robert Lighthizer** appeared before the Senate Finance Committee for a hearing on his nomination for U.S. trade representative. The Senate has not voted on the nomination.

On March 15, the Senate voted 85-12 to confirm **Daniel Coats** to be Director of National Intelligence. Sen. Feinstein voted in favor and Sen. Harris voted against the nomination.

On March 22, **Alexander Acosta** appeared before the Senate Health, Education, labor and Pensions committee for a hearing on his nomination as secretary of the Department of Labor. The Senate has not voted on the nomination.

On March 23, Gov. **Sonny Perdue** (R-GA) appeared before the Senate Agriculture Committee for a hearing on his nomination as secretary of the Department of Agriculture. The Committee approved Perdue's nomination by a voice vote on March 30.

POLICY AND REGULATORY UPDATE

Suspension of Premium Processing of H-1B visa applications

In early March, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced that it is temporarily suspending premium processing of H-1B skilled worker visa applications for up to six months beginning on April 3. USCIS said the suspension is intended to "reduce overall H-1B processing times" by allowing the government to "process long-pending petitions, which we have currently been unable to process due to the high volume of incoming petitions and the significant surge in premium processing requests over the past few years."

Premium processing costs an additional \$1,225 per application, but it provides a guarantee that applications will be reviewed within 15 days, or the fee is refunded, while regular processing could take more than six months.

UC relies on premium processing because the regular process takes so long and it interferes with the timing of hiring faculty and clinical trainees at our campuses. In response to this action,

the Association of American Universities (AAU) and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) coordinated a letter to USCIS regarding the harmful impacts that the suspension of H-1B premium processing will have on U.S. universities. In addition to AAU and APLU, the letter was signed by the Association of American Medical Colleges, College and University Professional Association for Human Resources and NAFSA: Association of International Educators. The letter can be found [here](#). For additional information, please contact Carolyn Henrich at Carolyn.Henrich@ucdc.edu or 202-974-6308.

ADVOCACY UPDATE

UCLA Testifies Regarding Federal Student Aid on Capitol Hill

Youlonda Copeland-Morgan, vice provost for enrollment management at UCLA, testified at a hearing on March 21, before the House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development, of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, on “[Improving Federal Student Aid to Better Meet the Needs of Students](#).” Rep. Susan Davis (D-CA) is ranking member on the Subcommittee and invited UC to share our ideas on potential reforms to the Higher Education Act (HEA), and, in particular, on proposals to simplify the federal student aid system.

Copeland-Morgan made the case that the federal investment in access to higher education must be increased. She stressed that all federal aid must be targeted to the most financially needy students, that campus-based aid programs must be expanded and strengthened, and that Congress should use the HEA reauthorization to make reforms to assure that financial aid programs are easy to understand for students and their families. However, she emphasized that any efforts to simplify programs must not reduce aid to students, or shift aid to higher-income students. FGR helped prepare the written and oral testimony for the hearing. For additional information, please contact Carolyn Henrich at Carolyn.Henrich@ucdc.edu or 202-974-6308.

Council for Agricultural Research, Extension and Teaching Advocacy

In early March, a UC delegation from the UC Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources, three campuses – UC Riverside, UC Berkeley and UC Davis – and several representatives from California’s agricultural and forestry industries, traveled to Washington, DC for the annual APLU CARET meeting. Attendees shared experiences with colleagues from land-grant colleges around the country. Over two days, the UC delegation met with 27 California congressional members and/or their staff to discuss UC’s federal and industry partnerships in agricultural research, education and outreach, and California’s needs, opportunities and challenges in agriculture and forestry. For additional information, please contact Chris Carter at Chris.Carter@ucdc.edu or (202) 974-6310.

Humanities Advocacy Day

The National Humanities Alliance held its annual meeting and “Humanities Advocacy Day” on March 13-14. UC hosted a delegation of ten participants from four UC campuses – UC Berkeley, UC San Diego, UC Santa Barbara, and UC Santa Cruz – along with two California State University campuses – Northridge and Dominguez Hills.

The California group met with California congressional delegation offices, and delivered materials (including two UC FGR-produced factsheets, which can be viewed online [here](#) and [here](#)) to the other key offices. The delegates shared information on the work they are doing on their campuses with the support of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and

urged members to increase funding for the NEH as well as other crucial humanities programs. UC delegates urged support for a FY 2018 funding level of \$155 million for the NEH. The NEH is the primary source of federal support for humanities research and its competitive grants leverage significant additional funding from state, foundation and philanthropic sources. For additional information, please contact Carolyn Henrich at Carolyn.Henrich@ucdc.edu or 202-974-6308.

Title VI/Fulbright Hays Advocacy

The Coalition for International Education, a group of about 30 national higher education organizations, which share a commitment to building U.S. global competence, held a meeting in Washington on March 8-9, to bring national attention to the need for a strong federal investment in programs that promote international education, foreign language expertise and global understanding. Known collectively as “Title VI” programs because of their placement in the HEA, these programs are at significant risk due to proposed budget cuts. UC coordinated nearly two dozen Capitol Hill meetings for faculty from UCLA and Berkeley, who along, with peers from Stanford and San Diego State University, made the case for ongoing federal investment. Title VI programs are critical to our nation’s diplomatic, business, trade, government and other enterprises that require deep expertise in international, area and global studies, as well as competence in many of the world’s less-commonly taught languages. For additional information, please contact Carolyn Henrich at Carolyn.Henrich@ucdc.edu or 202-974-6308.

UC Student Advocacy

National Association of Graduate and Professional Students

The National Association of Graduate and Professional Students (NAGPS) convened its Legislative Action Days in Washington, DC from March 10-14. The delegation included UC students from the Davis and San Diego campuses. NAGPS focused its congressional advocacy on:

- Federal funding for graduate student research;
- Graduate student aid, loan debt and loan forgiveness and repayment options; and
- Student visa reforms to help international students who come to the U.S. to study to stay and work.

Student Advocates for Graduate Education Advocacy Days

From March 26-29, the Student Advocates for Graduate Education (SAGE) held its annual spring advocacy event in Washington, DC. SAGE is a coalition of graduate students at US public research institutions that is committed to improving access, quality and opportunity for graduate and professional students. Graduate students from UC Davis, UCLA and UC San Diego participated and visited more than a dozen Capitol Hill offices. SAGE delegates advocate on issues agreed to by the membership and in turn, develop white papers for each topic. This year, SAGE focused on student debt, which they see as an obstacle to graduate education; campus wellness, which is a necessary component for the success of America’s future leaders; increased research funding, which is critical to the groundbreaking research and development underway at member institutions; and immigration reform to assure that the top graduate students from around the world can come to the U.S. to study and work with their international counterparts. UC helped coordinate the meetings and provided materials.

For additional information about any of the UC student advocacy activities, please contact Carolyn Henrich at Carolyn.Henrich@ucdc.edu or 202-974-6308.

FEDERAL CAMPUS ENGAGEMENT

- On March 3, Rep. **Susan Davis** (CA-53) toured Jacobs Medical Center and discussed regulations and the Affordable Care Act at **UC San Diego**.
- On March 9, **UC Berkeley**, Berkeley Law and the Division of Equality and Inclusion hosted a conversation with Associate Supreme Court Justice **Sonia Sotomayor**.
- On March 13, Rep. **Mark DeSaulnier** (CA-11) spoke at “Brainstorming Future Neurotechnology” hosted by the Helen Wills Neuroscience Center, **UC Berkeley**.
- On March 13, Rep. **Barbara Lee** (CA-13) spoke at “Fighting for Health Equity in 2017 and Beyond” hosted by the Berkeley Center for Social Medicine, **UC Berkeley**.
- On March 17, Real Admiral **Yancy B. Lindsey**, Commander, Navy Region Southwest, visited **UC San Diego’s Scripps Institution of Oceanography**. He met with head researchers conducting Navy relevant research and was briefed on the Navy Academic Fleet and Scripps Ship Operations.

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