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1. CONFERENCE SPENDING BILL PULLED FROM MARKUP: A bill intended to promote more transparency in government conference spending was pulled from a June 25 markup in the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee to allow for more debate.

The committee was scheduled to consider a substitute to S.1347, the Conference Accountability Act, among other bills. The substitute language was sponsored by Sen. Tom Coburn (R-OK) and Sen. Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND), and included more stringent reporting requirements for federal employees that have attended meetings where the agency expended more than \$50,000. The legislation also prevents agencies from spending more than \$500,000 on a single conference unless the leadership of the agency submits a request to Congress. The most damaging provisions restricting conference attendance that were in the original bill were not included in the substitute.

The bill was not marked up due to concern that more discussion and insight from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) should be included before the bill goes to a vote. This is an important issue for ASAE and we will continue to discuss it with members of the committee and staff. There is the possibility for a markup on July 23, but nothing has been announced. For more information on this issue, or if you are interested in joining the ASAE Travel Coalition, please email Mary Kate Cunningham at mcunningham@asaecenter.org.

2. SENATE DEMOCRATS REINTRODUCE DISCLOSE ACT: Senate Democrats led by Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) on June 24 reintroduced legislation known as the DISCLOSE Act, which would require all organizations that spend money to influence elections to disclose their donors.

Whitehouse said this week that the bill is already co-sponsored by 50 Democratic Senators. Similar legislation was introduced in 2010 following the Supreme Court's controversial Citizens United decision, which many have claimed opened the doors to unlimited spending on political ads by corporations, associations and unions. The bill was blocked in 2010 and again in 2012 by Republican filibusters.

The DISCLOSE Act would require organizations that spend \$10,000 or more

during an election cycle to file a report with the Federal Election Commission within 24 hours, detailing the amount and nature of each expenditure over \$1,000 and the names of all donors who gave \$10,000 or more. Whitehouse said this week the bill would let taxpayers know who's behind the flood of so-called "dark money" poured into elections in recent years.

"Since the Supreme Court's disastrous Citizens United decision, a torrent of dark money has swept through our political system, giving corporations and billionaires the ability to secretly buy election influence," Whitehouse said. "The DISCLOSE Act will require political groups to list publicly their big donors, so voters can at least know who is trying to sway their opinions."

Similar legislation has been introduced in the House by Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) but has never made it out of committee.

3. HOUSE HEARING FOCUSES ON FUTURE OF MUSIC LICENSING: Music industry leaders sought changes to current music licensing law at a June 25 hearing before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Courts, Intellectual Property and the Internet.

The congressional review of current copyright law came just as the Department of Justice considers whether to review its decades-old consent decrees with the nation's two largest performing rights societies that license and collect fees for the use of copyrighted music, Broadcast Music Inc. (BMI) and the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP).

The consent decrees date back to 1941 and were intended to address antitrust concerns arising from the market power BMI and ASCAP command. These groups collectively represent millions of songs and collect close to \$2 billion a year in royalties for their members.

But BMI and ASCAP – whose consent decrees were last amended in 1994 and 2001, respectively – have pushed hard for changes to the rules in light of technological advances that have impacted access and delivery of music, such as the emergence of Internet radio providers like Pandora.

Testifying before the House subcommittee this week, ASCAP President Paul Williams said digital services such as Pandora are revolutionizing how people enjoy music, but the regulatory system that governs how ASCAP can license copyrighted material has failed to keep pace, making it "increasingly difficult for music creators to realize a competitive return for their creative efforts..."

Trade show organizers and other users of music will want to pay close attention to whether there are changes to the rate-setting procedures or the process for resolving fee disputes, among other concerns. Associations are responsible for licensing the music used at the meetings, conventions and exhibitions they organize – not the facility that has leased the space or the individual exhibitors who might be playing music in their booths.

Comments are due to the DOJ by August 6. ASAE encourages associations that are concerned about this issue to submit comments [online](#) or share their concerns with us at publicpolicy@asaenet.org.

4. HOUSE LEADERSHIP CHANGES UNLIKELY TO AFFECT TAX REFORM: A shake-up in the Republican House leadership is unlikely to change Republicans' strategy for extending a number of expired tax breaks or initiating a major overhaul of the tax code.

Following Majority Leader Eric Cantor's (R-VA) surprising primary defeat June 10, House Republicans last week elected Majority Whip Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) to fill Cantor's leadership position and Rep. Steve Scalise (R-LA) will serve as majority whip.

After the vote, House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dave Camp (R-MI) told Bloomberg BNA he doesn't expect any change in the House strategy for bringing tax extenders to the floor or for moving a broader tax reform bill.

The Ways and Means Committee at the moment is still slowly bringing individual tax extender bills to the floor – particularly those that have a business focus – and seeking to make them permanent. On the Senate side, a bill extending most of the tax breaks has been advanced by the Senate Finance Committee but remains stalled on the floor because of disagreements over an open amendment process.

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