

April 2009

Government Relations



Congressional Update



Recent Events

Williams Mullen/Keelen Group hosted a reception at the U.S. Capitol on Tuesday, March 31, with nearly 200 congressmen, senators, congressional aides, WM attorneys and clients. Minority Whip Eric Cantor (R-Va.) made special remarks, commenting on all the old familiar faces in the room and congratulating Williams Mullen/Keelen Group on the new partnership. Sen. Mark Warner (D-VA) spent time covering the room, shaking hands and answering questions.

Clients were also able to meet with numerous other key congressional representatives from both sides of the aisle, spanning from Virginia to California. Afterward, clients were treated to a private dinner with Sen. Ben Nelson (D-NE), who sits on the critical appropriations committee, in addition to other high profile committees, and has a swing vote on major legislative issues.

This successful event highlighted Williams Mullen's federal relationships and strategic policy services.

Upcoming Events

Members of The Keelen Group plan to address all WM attorneys during the firm's annual retreat on Friday, April 25. Matt and Mike will highlight their progress during their first six months with the firm. They will also give an overview of the Obama administration's first year in office.

Election Update

A highly contested race for New York's 20th Congressional district between Republican James Tedisco and Democrat Scott Murphy is closer to an official outcome as absentee and other paper ballots are scheduled for counting within the next week. Currently, according to unofficial election results, Tedisco is ahead by a mere 97 votes. Nearly 10,000 outstanding absentee ballots are expected to determine the outcome of the race. If Tedisco wins the seat, a Republican will take the place of a Democratic seat previously held by Kirsten Gillibrand before she was tapped to replace Hillary Clinton in the U.S. Senate.

In the Senate, the never-ending race between Minnesota Senator Norm Coleman, a Republican, and challenger Al Franken, a Democrat, remains embattled in court decisions and absentee ballot votes. Currently, Franken is ahead by over 300 votes after a three-judge panel ruled that previously denied absentee ballots should in fact be counted. Coleman's lawsuit remains with several unsettled claims as he promises to appeal to the Supreme Court if the outcome is not in his favor.

Key Contacts

Jerry W. Kilgore
Williams Mullen
804.783.6933
jkilgore@williamsmullen.com

Matthew B. Keelen
Keelen Group
202.293.8120
mkeelen@keelengroup.com

Michael J. Falencki
Keelen Group
202.327.5065
mfalencki@keelengroup.com

Continued from page 1

Current News on Capitol Hill

Budget

The biggest buzz around Washington has by far been last week's \$3.53 trillion budget resolution for fiscal year 2010, adopted in differing forms by the House and the Senate. This action comes on the heels of a record stimulus package with similar partisan controversy. No Republicans, in the House or the Senate, endorsed this fiscal blueprint while several Democrats in each chamber also refused to support their party's plan. President Obama's proposed budget is not similar to either chamber's version but both plans allow for his initiatives on issues such as education, health care and energy.

Employee Free Choice Act

Avid supporters of the "card check" bill are pounding the pavement amidst a two-week Congressional recess to gear up for hearings before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee when legislators return to work.

Unions and their allies are working to influence swing votes and to secure enough votes to avoid a filibuster on the Senate floor. Their efforts continue despite the largely partisan issue – Democrats are typically for, and Republicans mostly against, this legislation.

The U.S. Chamber has responded to union activity by organizing a "fly-in" to D.C. to produce television ads and rally grassroots support with members representing interest from Florida to Alaska.

Health Care

President Obama recently held a forum on health care based on discussion with a wide range of interested stakeholders - legislators from both political parties, health care lobbyists, consumer advocates, and multiple citizen representatives. Obama touted his meeting as an issue of national importance and not a Democratic Party initiative and everyone involved promised to help produce a workable solution. Over the last month, however, old political squabbles have re-emerged and the basics of the structure, function and purpose of the health care system are caught in the debate.

With partisan politics back in play, the issue now stands over whether or not legislators will approach the health care issue with reconciliation. Under that guise, only 51 votes are needed in the Senate to pass legislation as opposed to the standard 60 votes. Many perceive the process as risky because it complicates months of compromise efforts and forces legislation through for one party that otherwise would have depended on a bipartisan effort.

Energy & Environment

Months of talk about significant reform in the name of climate change have come to a head as several pieces of legislation have emerged on the issue from House Democrats. A cap-and-trade system for emissions is proposed in a climate change bill by House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Henry A. Waxman (D-Calif.) and Energy and Environment Subcommittee Chairman Ed Markey (D-Mass.). Under the bill's provisions, greenhouse gas emissions would be regulated under a cap allowance and industries would trade pollution allowances on a market. Some free allowances may be reserved for industries most threatened by international competition such as steel and paper.

Ways and Means Committee member Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) has offered an alternative approach known as cap-and-dividend. Under his proposal, fossil fuel producers are targeted first as opposed to utility providers and factories, and free allowances are not part of the equation. Allowances would sell at an auction and those remaining would be divided and returned to consumers.

Lobbyists and interest groups have all joined in the mix as this standing debate over regulating greenhouse gas emissions continues.

For more information or inquiries, please contact Matt Keelen at mkeelen@keelengroup.com or Mike Falencki at mfalencki@keelengroup.com.

Williams Mullen Government Relations Legislative UPDATE. Copyright 2009. Editorial inquiries should be directed to Jerry Kilgore, 1021 East Cary Street, Richmond, VA 23219, 804.643.1991. This information is provided as an educational service and is not meant to be and should not be construed as legal advice. Readers with particular needs on specific issues should retain the services of competent counsel.

www.williamsmullen.com/keelen