

“THE AEROSPACE ADVOCATE”

WINTER 2015

Budget/Debt Deal Reached

After weeks of negotiations between congressional leaders and the White House a multiyear budget deal and debt limit increase was reached and signed into law by President Obama on 2 November. The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 ([H.R. 1314](#)) increases the budget caps set by the 2011 Budget Control Act by \$50 billion for Fiscal Year 2016 and by \$30 billion for Fiscal Year 2017. Under the budget plan, Fiscal Year 2016 defense spending would be raised to \$607 billion, \$5 billion less than the top-line figure that authorizers budgeted prior to the deal. It does not end the across-the-board budget cuts that automatically go into effect when the caps are exceeded, known as sequestration. In fact, it extends sequestration through 2025. The deal also raises the debt limit through 16 March 2017.

Omnibus Package Funds DOD, FAA, and NASA

The result of the budget deal mentioned above was an agreement by lawmakers to find consensus and pass an omnibus appropriations package that funds the government through the end of Fiscal Year 2016. The package, which encompasses all 12 of the annual appropriations bills, was signed into law on 18 December. It funds the DOD at \$572.7 billion, funds the FAA at \$16.3 billion, and funds NASA at \$19.3 billion. Of particular relevance to the aerospace community is a provision that lifts the ban on the Russian-built RD-180 engine for the Atlas 5 rocket and enables United Launch Alliance to compete for military satellite launches. Moreover, congressional appropriators have allocated \$2 billion for the Space Launch System, nearly 50 percent more than administration’s request of \$1.36 billion.

Ex-Im Bank Reauthorized

After months of ardent lobbying, heated exchanges among lawmakers, and the successful use of a rare procedural maneuver in the House of Representatives, the U.S. Export-Import Bank’s charter has been reauthorized until 2019. Members of Congress attached the bank’s reauthorization to a must-pass infrastructure spending bill, which was signed into law on 4 December. The bank’s charter had expired on 30 June and, consequently, several AIAA corporate members lost contracts and were not being considered for new export orders because of an inability to compete fairly in the global market. This was one of the Institute’s key issue items so we applaud Congress’s action.

R&D Tax Credit Becomes Permanent

A \$650 billion tax package, signed into law on 18 December, permanently extends the research and development (R&D) tax credit. For years the R&D tax credit has been addressed either in an annual or biannual basis and was not considered to be a permanent policy. The one- or two-year limits had placed aerospace and defense industry, among others, at a disadvantage with its foreign counterparts, and this permanent extension now allows industry to make strategic R&D investments. The tax limit remains at 14 percent. This was one of the Institute’s key issue items so we applaud Congress’s action.

Commercial Space Legislation Becomes Law

The [Commercial Space Launch Competitiveness Act](#) became law on 25 November. Among other things, the law extends the learning period during which the FAA is prohibited from issuing new regulations for commercial human spaceflight through Fiscal Year 2023, extends the government’s ability to indemnify commercial space launch companies from certain amounts of third-party losses through Fiscal Year 2023, extends the operation of the International Space Station through 2024, and directs the White

House Office of Science and Technology Policy to assess and recommend approaches for oversight of commercial non-governmental activities in space.

FY2016 NDAA Signed by President

The two-year budget agreement reached on 26 October (mentioned above) paved the way for passage of the annual defense policy bill, which authorizes Pentagon activities and programs at \$607 billion. The [National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2016](#), signed into law on 25 November, establishes new acquisition reform measures requiring service chiefs to sign off on programs suffering from cost overruns. It also includes [report language](#) requiring the Department of Defense and National Nuclear Security Administration to revise conference attendance policies for federal scientists seeking permission to attend science and technology conferences.

DOT Announces Drone Registration Requirements

On 14 December, the Department of Transportation announced new requirements for all drones weighing less than 55 lbs. Drone users are now required to [register](#) their devices by 19 February and pay a \$5 fee prior to its operation. Registrants will immediately receive a certificate with an identifying number to be placed on the device, enabling the device to be traced back to the owner in the event of a mishap or incident. The requirements come after the Unmanned Aircraft Systems Registration Task Force — composed of representatives from the UAS and manned aviation industries, the federal government, and trade groups representing law enforcement, pilots, and other aviation experts — offered its [recommendations](#) to the FAA in late November.

FROM THE PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

Join the Institute's Public Policy Activities

As mentioned in the fall newsletter, the PPC recently has undergone a significant reorganization in an effort to become more efficient, more relevant, and better positioned. The new PPC is now composed of [six outcome-based working groups](#), each led by two co-chairs appointed by the Vice President of Public Policy. The working groups will focus on Key Issue Development, the Congressional Visits Day Program, Forum Integration, States Advocacy, Engagement Activities, and Honors & Awards. This structure provides every AIAA member with an opportunity to participate in our public policy activities at a variety of levels and as their ability to participate allows. AIAA members interested in serving on one or more of the working groups should contact Steve Sidorek at steves@aiaa.org.

Registration Now Open for Congressional Visits Day

Make a difference in the future of aerospace at [AIAA Congressional Visits Day \(CVD\)](#) on 16 March 2016. This event brings together passionate aerospace professionals and students in Washington, D.C., for a day of advocacy and awareness with lawmakers. [Join us](#) and let your voice be heard by your state's congressional delegation and staff on key policy issues that matter most.

Sandy Magnus: Ease Travel Restrictions for Government Employees

In early November, *The Washington Post* published an [opinion piece](#) by Sandy Magnus that explained how onerous restrictions on federal workers' travel to pertinent technical meetings have consequently diminished collaboration with their private sector peers. The op-ed included stories from a few AIAA members illustrating the benefits of scientific conferences to their research and the advancement of their careers. It also described the Institute's continued advocacy efforts calling on Congress to ease travel restrictions on federal employees attending science and technology conferences. We continue to encourage all members positively impacted by scholarly conferences to contribute to this effort by visiting www.aiaa.org/yourstory.

IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO AIAA MEMBERS

Jim Albaugh to Address “The Future of AIAA: Why Governance Matters to You” at AIAA SciTech 2016

On Monday, 4 January, at 1730 hrs PST at AIAA SciTech 2016, Jim Albaugh will give a presentation and answer questions on the proposed changes to the Institute’s constitution recommended by the Governance Working Group and endorsed by the Board of Directors. If you are unable to attend AIAA SciTech 2016, the session will be livestreamed at <http://new.livestream.com/AIAAVideo/SciTech2016>. It also will be archived and the link will be sent to all members.

In March 2016, every AIAA member will be asked to vote “Yes” or “No” on the changes to the Institute’s constitution. We will need an overwhelming majority of our membership to vote “Yes” on the changes in order to propel the organization into the future. The changes will facilitate the new governance structure that is essential to position the Institute to be an adaptable, nimble, and proactive organization: shaping the future of aerospace for the next 50 years and beyond. This is an event no Institute member should miss, and we strongly encourage you to attend, or watch online, and learn why this is vital to your membership organization.

For more details and background on the governance changes, visit: <http://aiaa.org/governance>.