

The Farm Bill Moves Through the Senate - ML Strategies Weekly Energy and Environmental Update

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Congress came to a halt early last week as members mourned the loss of their colleague Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) who passed away last Monday. Following the Senator's funeral on Wednesday, the Senate considered the Farm Bill on Thursday, voting 75-22 to invoke cloture. On Monday, the Senate voted 66-27 in favor of the bill, and attention now shifts to the House, where the bill could reach the floor for debate as soon as next week.

Unlike last year, it appears House leadership will find the time for the Farm Bill in the next few weeks. Representatives Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) and Bruce Braley (D-IA), along with 11 Democratic cosponsors, introduced H.R. 2290, the [Rural Energy Investment Act](#). The bill would provide \$1.3 billion in mandatory funding to Farm Bill energy programs over the next five years. While the House is not expected to vote on the measure, it does provide an important marker for Agriculture Department energy programs as the chamber works toward floor debate on the bill.

The Senate will next take up immigration and student loan issues; the House will consider its counterparts after the Senate wraps up their bills. Both chambers will continue to work on appropriations with the House acting more quickly. The House Armed Services Committee considered and approved the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014 on Wednesday; several amendments related to energy, including biofuels, were added.

Congress is expected to consider energy legislation and nominations between the July 4 and August recesses. Issues including Shaheen-Portman, a handful of hydropower bills, and the nominations of Gina McCarthy to be Environmental Protection Agency Administrator and Allison Macfarlane to continue to serve as Nuclear Regulatory Commission Chairman are on the docket. The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee plans to host a hearing next month to examine the prices of gasoline and other fuels.

Off the Hill, the Department of Agriculture is expected to announce a new enrollment window for the 9005 Advanced Biofuels Program, a program created under the 2008 Farm bill that provides payments to advanced biofuels producers. Applications are accepted for the coming fiscal year in October, so the new enrollment window will allow advanced biofuels producers to participate for the remaining two quarters of FY13. In the most recent quarterly payment in mid-May, the USDA distributed approximately \$14 million to biofuels producers.

Secretary of Interior Sally Jewell announced June 6 the department will extend the public comment period for the recent proposed rule on fracking on public lands by 60 days; comments will be accepted through late August.

On Friday, Southern California Edison announced it will officially close its nuclear power plant in San Onofre. The plant, which has been offline since January 2012, had been a top issue for Senate Environment and Public Works Chairman Barbara Boxer (D-CA). Two weeks ago, she asked the Justice Department to investigate operations to see if the company had misled shareholders, and last week, she requested 70,000 documents related to the plant during the consideration of Dr. Macfarlane's nomination.

The U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change began another round of climate talks in Bonn, Germany on June 3; the discussions will conclude on Friday.

For more on the latest energy and clean technology regulatory and legislative developments please see [ML Strategies'](#) most recent [Energy and Environmental Update](#).

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