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All -

It's time to start thinking about preparation for the 2018 budget hearings!

While this could still certainly change, current talk is that tentative roll out for the budget will be the 3rd week in May (22nd or thereabouts, the week before Memorial Day). This timing means that the Secretary could be in front of Appropriations Committees, SENR, and HNR anywhere from late that week to the third week in June, depending on schedules.

Given that this is the first go-round with a new team, the hope for Department-level hearings is that we can continue to focus on big picture issues or that have been identified as important to Committee members, reducing issue volume, paper, and time.

The plan would be to leave the truly parochial issues to post-hearing QFR or staff follow-up.

As in the past, we'd first like to develop a list of issues for both sets of hearings – authorizers and appropriators, and follow that with briefing papers detailing those issues.

You know the drill by now: we are generally looking for issues that the Department's CL offices (and programs) are aware of or that have been raised by Members during meetings, authorizing committee oversight and legislative hearings, correspondence, etc., that are important to members and could be raised to the Secretary at these hearings.

I understand the need to coordinate with your bureau budget offices, and you should, closely. We will be coordinating with the Department's Budget Office. This makes the process much smoother and reduces duplication of effort.

At the same time, we have to set deadlines and we have to make sure the process is moving forward because we must ensure the Secretary and his staff are aware of key and controversial issues and have material available to them that is appropriate to accomplish pre-hearing briefings.

What that means: when the time comes, we will need the information regardless of what stage of clearance it is in or who is currently reviewing it.

With that in mind, here is what we need and when:

1. Please identify any issues you think may be relevant for these hearings, whether they have been raised by Committee members at briefings/meetings, in correspondence, or received significant press. **Provide me with a list of those issues by COB Wednesday, April 26th.** We will review with the Department's budget office and figure out if we have anything to add;
2. We will let you know shortly after we receive and review your lists what additional papers and other information we may need you to develop. For the time being, **let's shoot to have any papers developed for those issues you all have identified as important (in addition to any information we may request) by Wednesday, May 10th.**

We'll plan to use the same format that we've used in the past.

I know it is not a lot of time to get things done, but we will work with you to try to keep the prep work at a minimum and to use existing information where we can. As noted above, timing could also change. As dates become clearer we will let you know and adjust the schedule accordingly.

For the briefing paper format, please use Times New Roman, 12 point type for these papers and present the information in bullet format. Please try to limit each paper to just the key facts, one page maximum. Be forewarned: we will return briefing papers to you if they are not in this format or if they are longer than one page!!

Again, we are looking for general interest or member-related issues that you reasonably believe could be an issue at this hearing.

If you have any questions, work with your attorney in this office or feel free to e-mail me.

As always, thanks for your help on this important project.

Chris.

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