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DC State of Mind; A Congressional update

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Every day the headlines are dominated by news of a slow economic recovery, high unemployment, and a Congress focused on the next election. Deficit hawks, Tea Partiers, partisanship, and mid-term elections are all topics typically outside the ken of physics but are critically important to our ability to continue to pursue cutting edge innovative research. For example, during the last six months Congress has, among other things, worked on passing the 2011 federal budget and reauthorization of America COMPETES. Both of these major pieces of legislation are fundamental to how our country will fund physics research for the next few years. For the past two years, science has done very well thanks to the support of Congress and the administration. The coming years are going to be far more difficult and every physicist needs to commit themselves to defending the gains we have made. This talk will provide an overview of what has happened on Capitol Hill in the past few months and what, to the best of our knowledge, the physics community can expect for the coming years. The legislative successes of the last few months were, in part, made possibly with the aid of physicists who got involved. Around the country, physicists wrote opinion pieces for their local papers, wrote letters-to-the-editor, called their representatives, made their voices heard and helped shape policy.