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House Democrats Plan Schedule for Lame-Duck Session

By Alan K. Ota, CQ Staff

House Democratic leaders on Wednesday outlined a schedule for the lame-duck session that would have lawmakers in town for at least two weeks in November and into early December.

Chris Van Hollen, D-Md., assistant to Speaker Nancy Pelosi, said in an interview after a conference call among Democratic leaders that lawmakers were likely to work through next week, take a week off for the Thanksgiving recess, and return for a second — and, for now, final — week from Nov. 29 to Dec. 3.

Van Hollen, who is poised to take over next year as the top Democrat on the Budget Committee, said he was unsure how Democrats would resolve disputes over unfinished business such as tax cuts that are set to expire Dec. 31 and funding for federal programs beyond the stopgap spending measure (PL 111-242) that expires Dec. 3.

“We simply identified some of the issues that are out there,” Van Hollen said of the private leadership chat. “Obviously, the big issue is how we deal with various tax issues. And then there’s the issue of an omnibus [spending bill] versus a continuing resolution. There are a lot of other potential issues. We’re going to try to get the nutrition bill.”

He was referring to ongoing talks over a possible extension of expiring provisions of the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts (PL 107-16, PL 108-27), the debate over whether to move an omnibus spending bill for fiscal 2011 or another temporary spending measure, and a stalled child nutrition bill (HR 5504).

Van Hollen said that Pelosi, D-Calif., did not bring up the issue of the tough caucus race for minority whip — the second-ranking Democrat in the next Congress — between Steny H. Hoyer of Maryland and James E. Clyburn of South Carolina. Both men were on the telephone call, Van Hollen said, but the issue did not come up.

Democratic aides said Pelosi has encouraged both men to reach a settlement to avert the potentially bloody intraparty fight. “That wasn’t part of the discussion,” Van Hollen said.