

# OVERNIGHT MONEY: Thursday is Bernanke and Paul Ryan time

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Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke will hold a rare question-and-answer session Thursday at the National Press Club.

## Thursday's Big Story:

Ben Bernanke, the chairman of the Federal Reserve, will hold a rare question-and-answer session and discuss the economic recovery at the National Press Club around lunchtime. Bernanke's central bank has come under some fire of late, after it announced that it would buy back \$600 billion of Treasury bonds in a second "quantitative easing" effort. The move is intended to encourage private lending, but critics, including several high-ranking congressional Republicans, charge it will lead to high inflation.

Bernanke's discussion with reporters comes as Fed officials have talked, in the face of the criticism they're receiving, about making a more public effort to explain their policies.

## What Else to Watch For:

**First to the House:** House appropriators are expected on Thursday or Friday to get informal word from their Budget Committee chairman, Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wisc.), on just how much the Republican leadership wants to cut spending this year. The Appropriations Committee would then have the coming week to flesh out what exactly to cut.

The Congressional Budget Office has unofficially estimated that rolling non-security discretionary spending back to 2008 levels would mean an \$82 billion reduction.

**And then the Senate:** A day after the health care repeal push failed, lawmakers will continue floor consideration of a two-year, \$34.5 billion measure to fund the Federal Aviation Administration. The bill's \$8.1 billion for airport construction would support the employment of 90,000 workers and affect another 190,000 jobs, according to [estimates](#).

Speaking of aviation, the Finance Committee will hold a hearing on the Airport and Airway Trust Fund on Thursday, a little over one week after the president called on Congress to boost its investment in infrastructure. Proponents of more dollars for the nation's infrastructure argue that not only will it improve America's competitiveness, but also will create jobs, a top priority for the Congress.

And over at Budget, the panel will host a morning showdown over stimulus spending. The committee will hear from Mark Zandi, the chief economist of Moody's Analytics,

who has praised the 2009 stimulus bill for averting a deeper recession -- and from Chris Edwards of the Cato Institute, who has denounced the stimulus approach. Till von Wachter of Columbia University, who has advocated increasing spending on education to help younger workers displaced by the economic downturn, and Raymond Scheppach of the National Governors Association, who can be expected to address the fiscal crises among the states, are also scheduled to appear.

In their second go-round of the day, the Budget Committee will hear in the afternoon about proposals for increasing efficiency from a panel including John Podesta, a former chief of staff to President Clinton.

**Also on Tap:** Labor Secretary Hilda Solis is the featured speaker on a teleconference discussing a new online tool that would give career advice and help job seekers find openings. Elsewhere, Tony West, an assistant attorney general, speaks at an American Bar Association conference on consumer protection.

#### **Economic Indicators:**

-- The Labor Department is set to drop weekly jobless claim numbers and fourth quarter information on productivity and costs.

-- The Census Bureau is scheduled to circulate data on manufacturers' shipping and inventories.

-- Freddie Mac is slated to release weekly mortgage rate numbers.

-- And the Institute for Supply Management is set to release a January service sector index.

#### **Breaking Wednesday:**

**Whoops:** The chairwoman of the Securities and Exchange Commission says her agency needs 800 more staffers to implement the Dodd-Frank Wall Street reform measure. That push, *The New York Times* reports, comes as the Government Accountability Office has **taken the S.E.C. to task** for not being able to keep up with even very basic accounting tasks.

**It Keeps You Running:** On Capitol Hill at least, March might mean more than the arrival of spring. Our Erik Wasson reports that congressional aides say that, with funding for the federal government set to expire on March 4, a short-term budget resolution will **almost certainly be necessary** to avoid a government shutdown.

The House will vote later this month on a measure to fund the government for the rest of the year. But that legislation is not expected to be well-received in the Senate.

**Book 'Em:** Ten websites said to be illegally showing live sporting events were **seized** on Wednesday, *The Wall Street Journal* reports, noting the move came just days before Super Bowl Sunday.

**D.C. Tops in Job Growth:** The Redskins, Nationals and Wizards may have hit rough patches, but the Washington area is **first in job creation**, the Associated Press reports. Spurred by hiring in the federal government, the capital region added 57,500 jobs last year. (The Capitals aren't bad, either.)

Dallas, buoyed by the airline and shipping industries, and Boston, sparked by biotech companies, followed behind Washington in creating jobs.