

On September 19, President Obama signed into law a Continuing Resolution (CR) that will fund the federal government from October 1 – the start of fiscal year (FY) 2015 – through December 11 at the FY 2014 spending level. The House and Senate each overwhelmingly approved the bill earlier in the week, avoiding the last-minute drama and eventual government shutdown that took place last year. The bill includes nearly a dozen funding changes, known as “anomalies,” to the current funding levels, including a total of \$88 million within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to respond to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa and accelerate the development of vaccines and therapies. The CR will maintain current spending levels nearly identical to their FY 2014 figures, but to fund the anomalies a minor across-the-board cut of 0.554 percent to all budget accounts will be applied.

When Congress returns on November 12 in the four-week “lame duck” session (weeks of November 12, November 17, December 1, and December 8), there will be a number of potential actions available to continue to fund the government for the remainder of FY 2015. The options include:

- Enact an omnibus appropriations bill that contains some, but not all 12, bills, and extends the CR for the remaining bills (likely the more contentious bills, such as Labor-HHS-Education);
- Enact an omnibus appropriations bill that contains all 12 of the appropriations bills (similar to what happened in January 2014 for the remainder of FY 2014 spending);
- Extend the CR for the remainder of the year for all 12 appropriations bills;
- Extend a short-term CR that would run early into 2015 for the 114th Congress to consider (more likely scenario if Republicans take the Senate majority in the November elections, because this would provide them a stronger negotiating position).

Despite one of the earliest starts in recent history to the appropriations process this spring, both the House and Senate got bogged down due to contentious policy issues, disagreements over amendment procedures and caution to avoid taking controversial votes in an election year. Ultimately, the House passed seven of its appropriations bills while the Senate reported eight bills out of the full Appropriations Committee but was unable to pass any bills through on the floor.

The Senate Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee reported its bill to the full Committee on June 9, but the markup was abruptly cancelled and ultimately derailed over Democratic Leadership concerns regarding Republican plans to offer a series of provocative amendments that could have posed challenges for vulnerable Democrats who are running for reelection in November. Six weeks later, the Senate Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill and draft report were released to outline the positions that the Senate majority will take when negotiating with the House on a year-end package in the lame duck session.

The proposed \$50 million cut to the Section 317 Immunization program in the President’s FY 15 request was fully restored in the draft Senate bill, to **\$611.177 million**, which is a slight increase from the FY 14 figure of \$610.847. The report language for the program is also attached.

The House has failed to report its Labor-HHS-Education bill out of full Committee for the last several years, as the threat of divisive riders and funding for the Affordable Care Act has continued to encumber the bill’s progress. The sprawling bill is the second largest discretionary spending package, and is usually one of the most difficult bills to pass.

House Labor-HHS-Education Chairman Jack Kingston’s (R-GA) campaign for Senate also complicated the bill’s progress in the House. After advancing to the Republican primary runoff for the vacant Senate

seat, Kingston lost the nomination to businessman David Perdue on July 22. While it is still unclear who the next Subcommittee Chairman will be, and what his or her plans are for the bill, Kingston will still be the Chairman during negotiations over a final package during the lame duck session in November and December.

On September 15, House Labor-HHS-Education Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) unveiled a draft FY 2015 appropriations bill to showcase her priorities if the Democrats were in the majority. The bill uses higher funding numbers than the actual House 302(b) subcommittee allocation for Labor-HHS-Education, so it has been generally viewed as a messaging bill. It mostly contains similar numbers to the Senate bill, including an identical \$798.7 million for the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Immunization and Respiratory Diseases Center, but no program-by-program breakdown of individual budget lines.