



Budget Digest – Week of April 24th

THE CONTINUING RESOLUTION

The Federal Government is currently operating under a temporary spending measure known as a “continuing resolution,” or CR. The current CR runs out on 28 April 2017, at which point funding to operate government agencies will stop unless Congress takes action.

What is a CR? According to the Government Accountability Office, a CR is “an appropriation act that provides budget authority for federal agencies, specific activities, or both to continue in operation when Congress and the President have not completed action on the regular appropriation acts by the beginning of the fiscal year.”

Governing Under a CR. A well-functioning budget process, including the annual passage of 12 regular appropriations bills, enables good governing and efficient use of resources. Through it, Congress exercises its Article I authority. While a CR prevents a lapse in government operations, it denies Members the opportunity to thoroughly debate government spending and update funding priorities through amendments in the regular appropriations process. CRs also create frustrations and inefficiencies in government agencies, who cannot plan their activities, especially programs with long lead times, due to the inherent uncertainty associated with CRs.

What are Anomalies and Why Do They

Matter? Although continuing resolutions typically provide funds at the previous fiscal year’s rate, they may include exceptions for certain appropriations accounts or activities. Recent examples of such “anomalies” include: funding for the 2017 presidential transition and inauguration; funding to cover higher-than-expected wildfire costs; and additional funding to meet production needs for the military. Anomalies do not allow spending above the statutory budget caps, but they do permit adjustments to meet needs for the current fiscal year.

What Happens Next? Congress has three options to address the CR’s impending deadline:

1. Extend the current CR until some future date to allow Congress to consider the remaining appropriations bills.
2. Do nothing and allow a partial government shutdown to occur.
3. Pass full-year appropriations bills either individually or in packages.

THE BUDGET PROCESS IS NOT WORKING

31

OF CRs *PASSED BY*
CONGRESS SINCE 2010

3

OF FISCAL YEARS SINCE
1955 IN WHICH *NOT ONE*
CR WAS ENACTED

21

OF CRs *ENACTED FOR*
FY 2001 ALONE