



HOUSE  
BUDGET  
COMMITTEE

# Budget Digest

Chairman Steve Womack

July 10, 2018

## STATUS OF FY 2019 APPROPRIATIONS BILLS

The most fundamental role of Congress is the power of the purse—a duty fulfilled through the federal budget process established by the *Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974* (Budget Act). The Budget Act calls for Congress to pass 12 separate spending bills (known as appropriations) each fiscal year.

**Appropriations Timeline.** According to the Budget Act, the House may begin consideration of appropriations bills on May 15 for the following fiscal year. By June 10, the House Appropriations Committee must report out the last of the 12 appropriations bills. The House must then consider and complete action on all the bills by June 30.

Since the Budget Act does not provide a mechanism for enforcing the timeline, these deadlines are often missed. As a result, Congress frequently relies on continuing resolutions or omnibuses, causing uncertainty about government spending or raising the threat of a shutdown.

**Status in the House.** While the House Appropriations Committee is charged with reporting all bills out of committee by June 10, it reported seven of the 12 by that deadline for fiscal year 2019. Currently, the Committee has two remaining bills to advance: Homeland Security and Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies.

On the floor, the House of Representatives has passed four of these bills. Three of these bills were considered as a single package (H.R. 5895, which includes Energy and Water, Legislative Branch, and Military Construction-Veterans Affairs). The House has also requested a conference with the Senate and appointed conferees on H.R. 5895.

**Status in the Senate.** While the Senate Appropriations Committee has now considered every bill, only eight were reported out by June 10. On the floor, the Senate has also considered and passed a version of H.R. 5895, which includes the same three appropriations bills as the House. The Senate has not yet considered any other appropriations measures.

**The Need for Reform.** Improving the current budget and appropriations process is long overdue. In fact, Congress has not followed regular order since fiscal year 1995—the last time Congress passed a budget conference agreement followed by all of the separate appropriations bills before the beginning of the fiscal year. The issue is particularly evident this year since the topline discretionary level was agreed upon more than two months in advance of the statutory deadline. Fortunately, the bipartisan, bicameral Joint Select Committee on Budget and Appropriations Process Reform is currently looking for ways to ensure Congress fulfills its constitutional responsibility for the American people.

History of Appropriations Consideration	
Time Period	Appropriations Completed on Time
Past 5 Years	1 out of 60
Past 10 Years	5 out of 120
Past 25 Years	48 out of 312