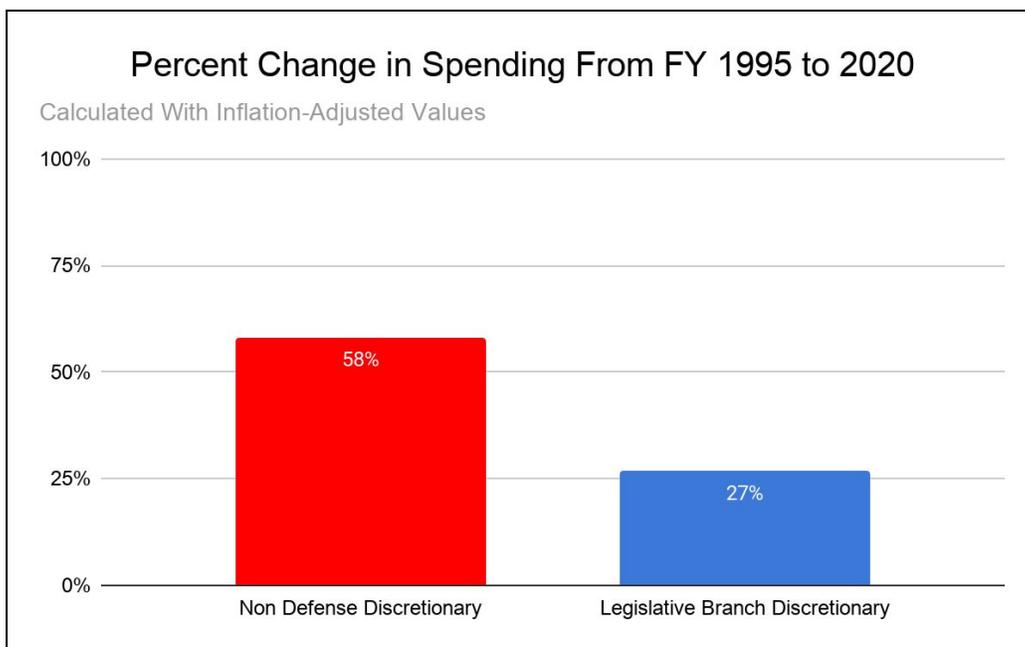
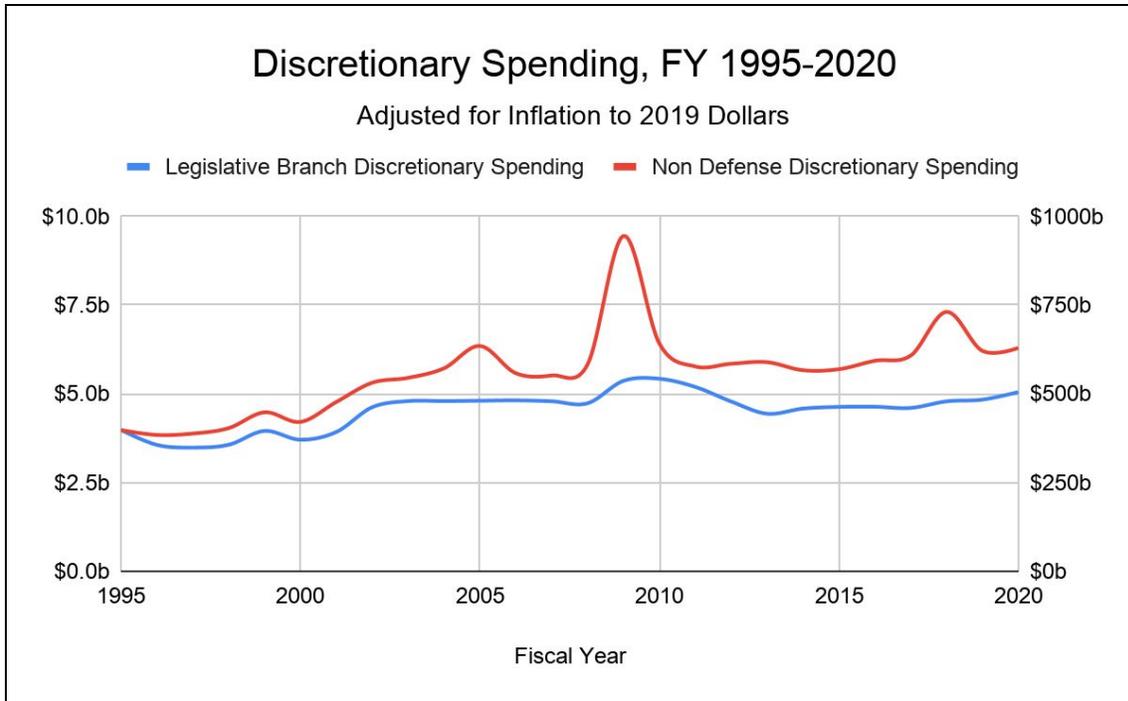


The Undermining of Congress

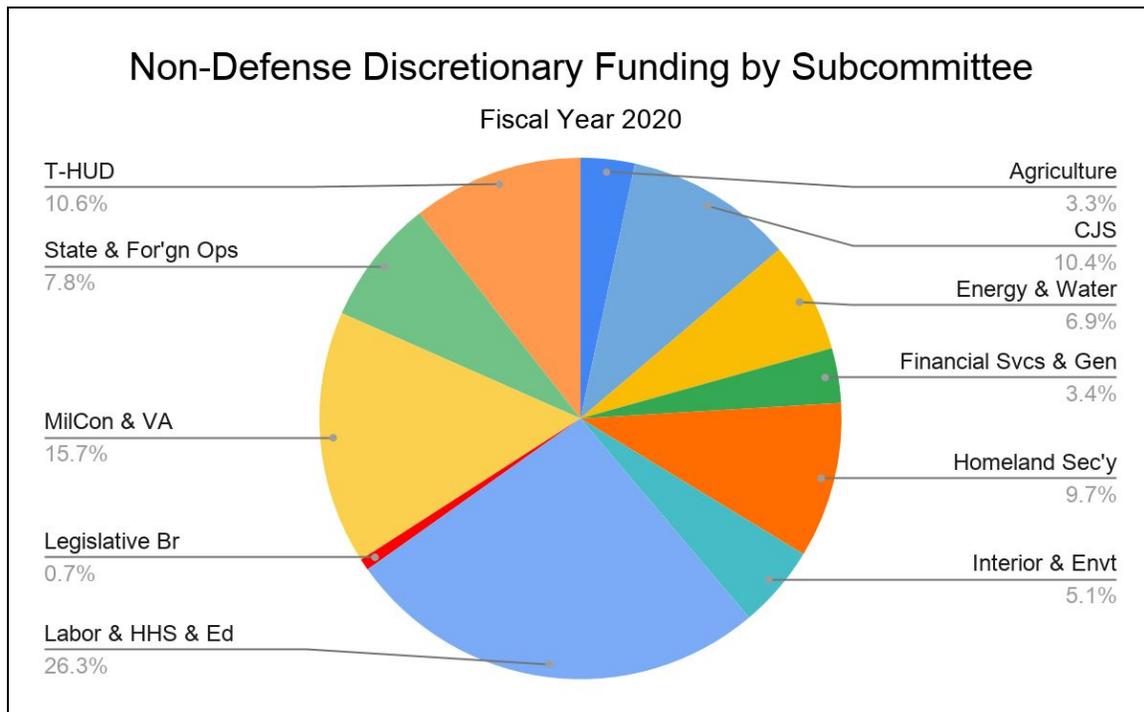
Prepared by: Daniel Schuman, Demand Progress
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The Legislative branch plays a central role in our democracy, but for decades *Congress has systematically underfunded congressional operations as compared to the rest of government.*

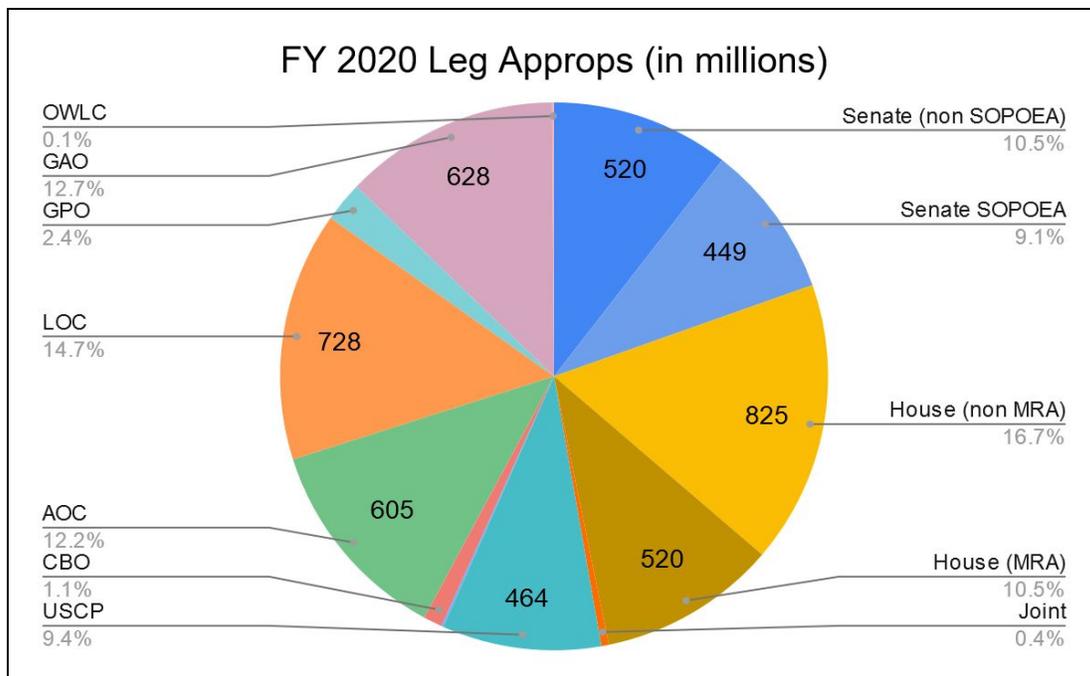
The chart below shows discretionary non-defense discretionary spending from 1995-2020 (in constant dollars. During that quarter-century, non-defense discretionary spending increased by **58%**, but spending for the legislative branch increased only by **27%**.



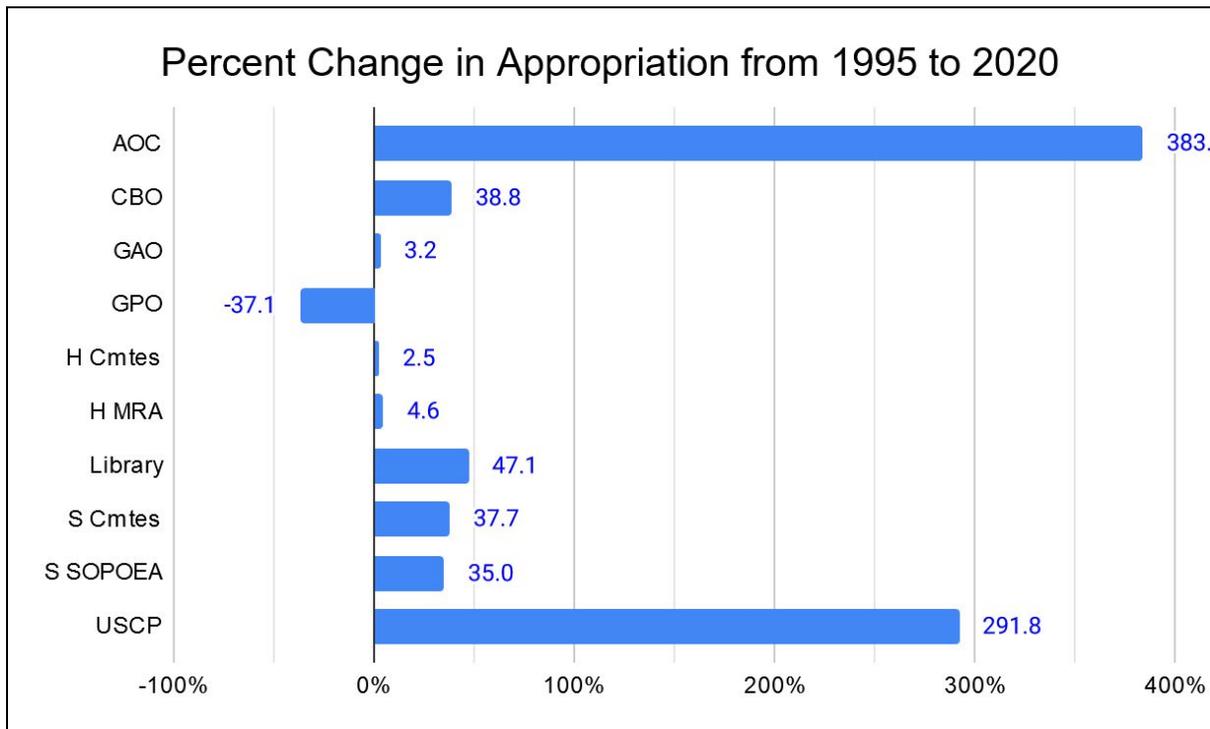
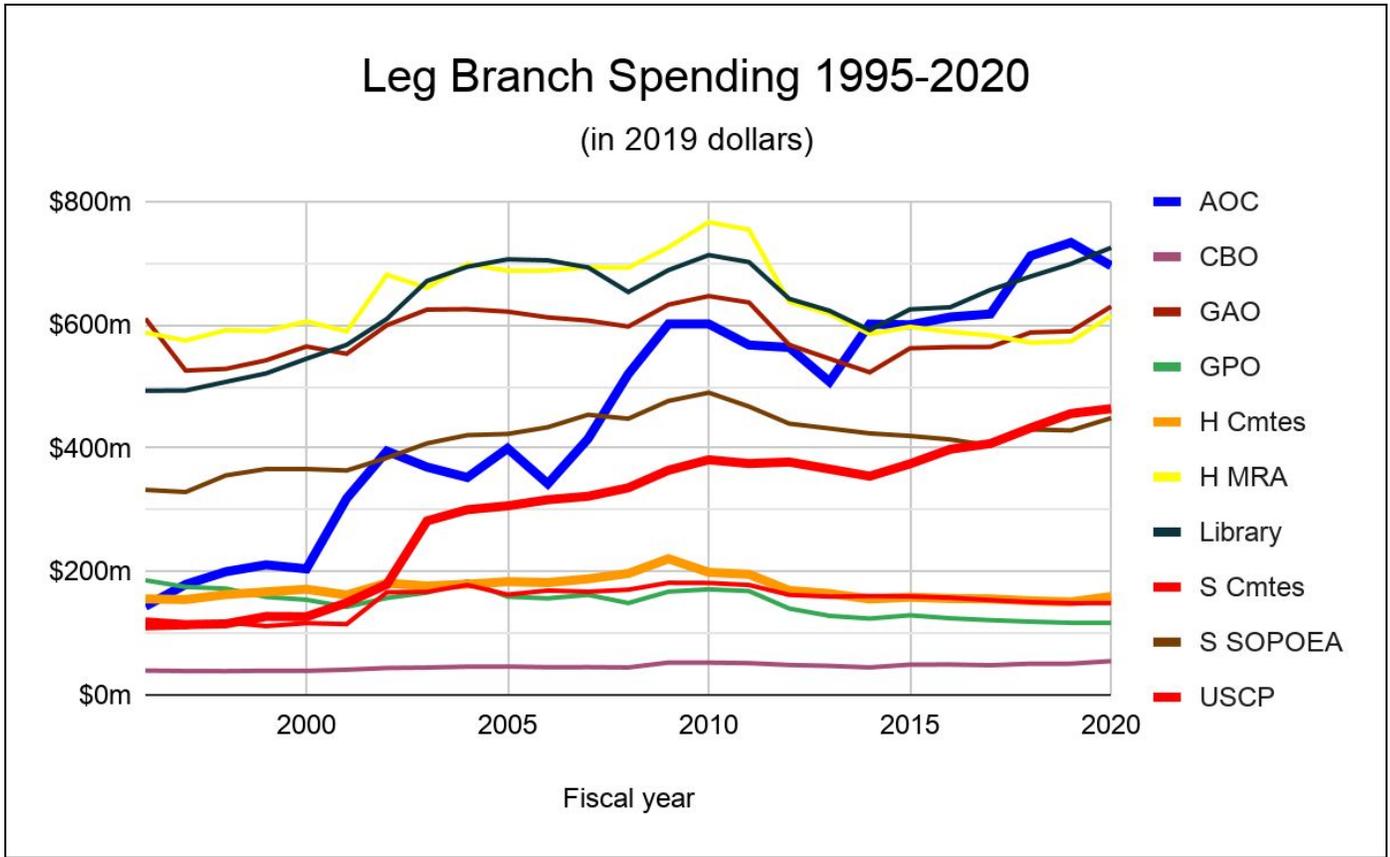
The legislative branch receives only **0.7%** of non-defense discretionary funding. Total non-defense discretionary funding for FY 2020 was **\$621.5 billion**; the legislative branch received just under **\$5 billion**.



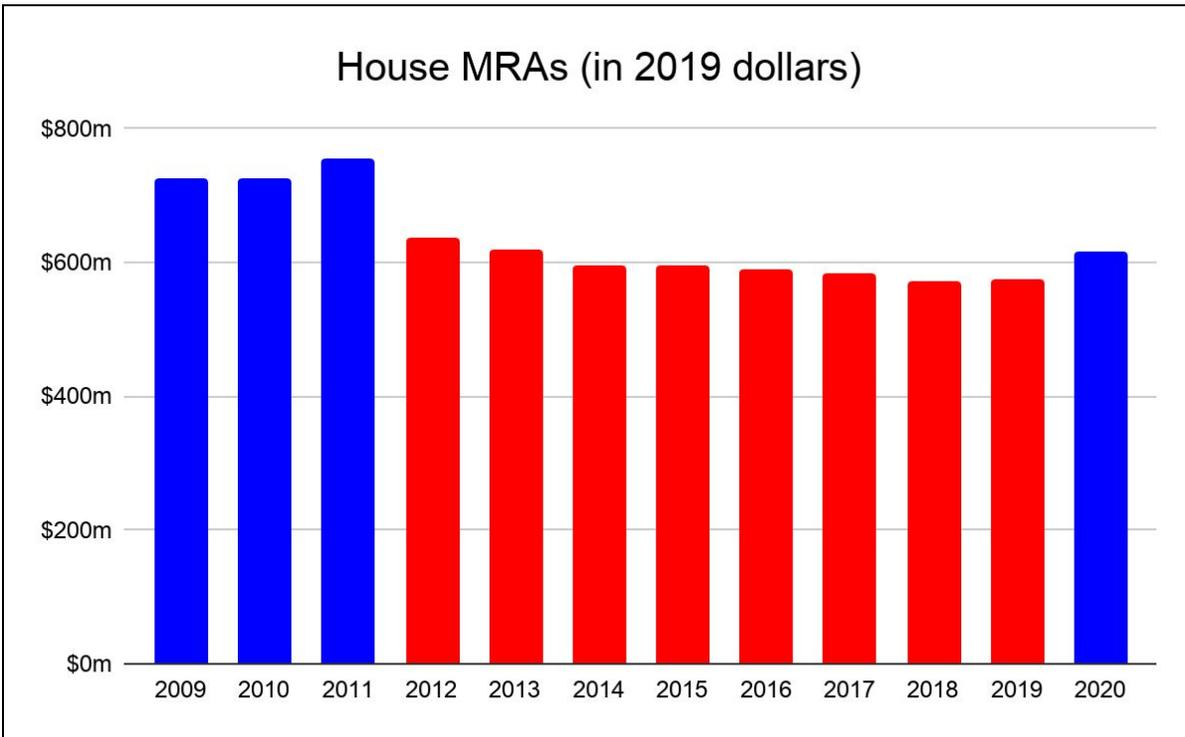
Within the legislative branch, 20% of its total funding goes towards the personal offices in the House and the Senate, at **\$520m** each, which covers all member representational costs. Major costs for Congress come from its support agencies: the Library of Congress gets 15% of the budget (**\$728m**); the Architect and GAO each gets about 12% (**~\$610m**); and the Capitol Police get 9.5% (**~\$460m**). (The USCP has requested a \$56m increase for FY 2021.)



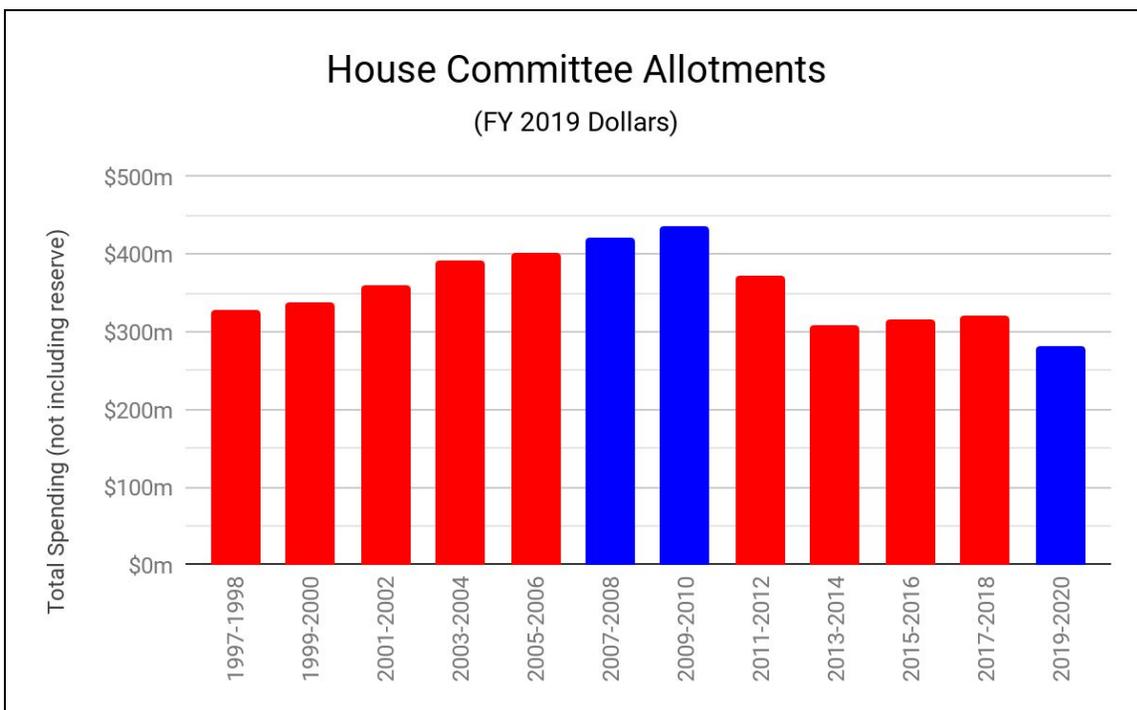
Particularly interesting, however, is the spending trend. *The two major cost drivers inside the legislative branch are the Capitol Police and the Architect of the Capitol.* By comparison, House MRA's and House committee funding levels are unchanged, even though costs of living in Washington have increased, as has the number of constituents served by each office.



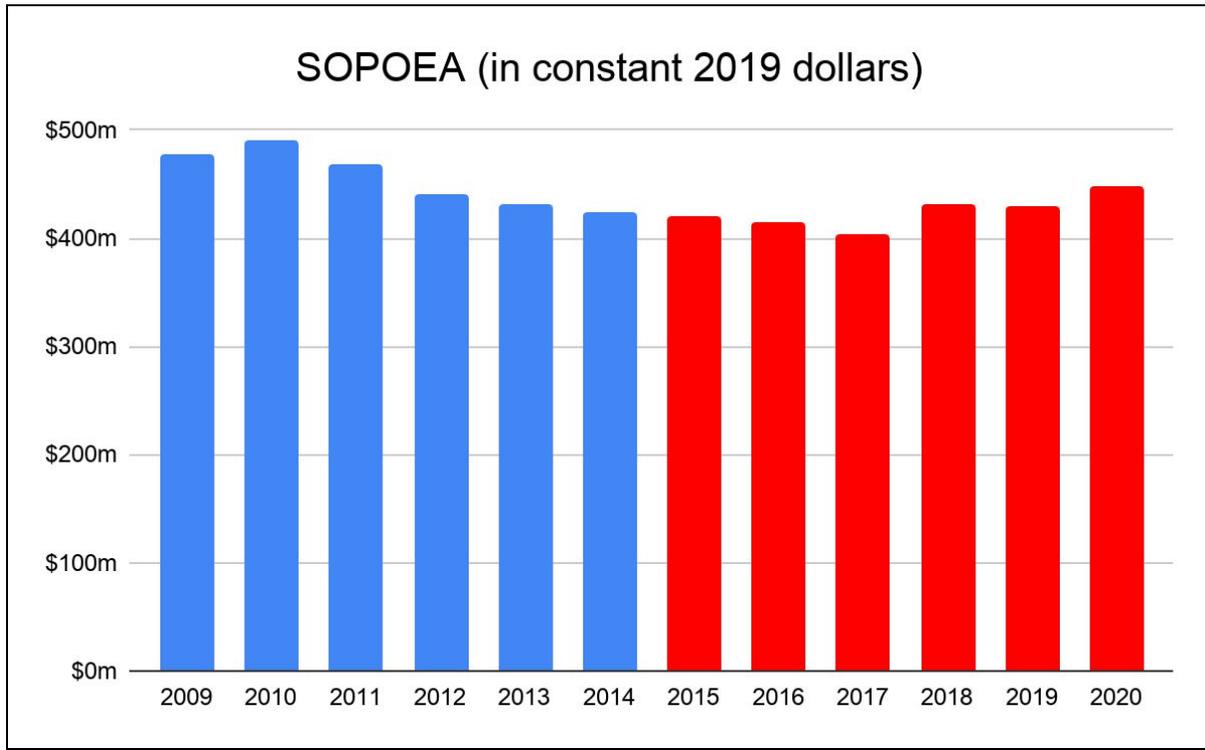
Let's take a closer look at the spending trends for personal and committee offices in the House. Funding levels for the MRA in the House is actually significantly *lower* than a decade ago. For FY 2020, the MRA is set at **\$615m**, but it was **\$726m** in FY 2010 (adjusted for inflation), which is a 15% reduction. It's even lower than FY 2013, which was at \$618m.



Spending on House committees is down by \$153m since 2009/10, a 35% reduction.



The Senate did a somewhat better job of retaining capacity in its personal offices, but not in its committees. For FY 2020, the SOPOEA is set at **\$449m**, but it was **\$490m** in FY 2010 (adjusted for inflation), which is an 8% reduction. (There’s an automatic adjustment for population size for personal office staff working on constituent matters.)



Spending on Senate committees is down by \$113m since 2009/10, a 35% reduction.

