



Appropriations Watch: FY2015

Sep 9, 2014 | [Other Spending \(/issue-area/other-spending\)](#)

Note: This page is no longer being updated.

For the status of FY2017 appropriations bills, see [Appropriations Watch: FY2017 \(http://crfb.org/blogs/appropriations-watch-fy-2017\)](http://crfb.org/blogs/appropriations-watch-fy-2017). Final FY2015 funding was settled through the "CROmnibus (<http://crfb.org/blogs/budget-gimmicks-cromnibus-bill>)" bill in December 2014 and March 2015 Homeland Security appropriations (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-politics/wp/2015/03/03/house-to-vote-on-new-bill-to-fully-fund-homeland-security/>). For a detailed breakdown of the 2015 appropriations, see the CBO tables [here \(https://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/114th-congress-2015-2016/dataandtechnicalinformation/45384-2015-DiscretionaryCurrentStatus.pdf\)](https://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/114th-congress-2015-2016/dataandtechnicalinformation/45384-2015-DiscretionaryCurrentStatus.pdf).

The table below shows the status of each appropriations bill. To learn more about the appropriations process, read our report: [Appropriations 101 \(http://crfb.org/document/appropriations-101\)](http://crfb.org/document/appropriations-101).

Item	House	Senate
302(b) Allocations	Approved by full committee (25-20) (http://appropriations.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=378441)	Approved by full committee (16-14) (http://www.appropriations.senate.gov/hearings-and-testimony/full-committee-markup-allocations-milconva-agriculture)
Agriculture	Approved by full committee (31-18) (http://appropriations.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=380251)	Approved by full committee (30-0) (http://www.appropriations.senate.gov/hearings-and-testimony/full-committee-markup-allocations-milconva-agriculture)
Commerce, Justice, Science	Passed House (321-87) (http://beta.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-bill/4660/actions?q={%22search%22%3A(%22HR+4660%22)})	Approved by full committee (30-0) (http://www.appropriations.senate.gov/hearings-and-testimony/full-committee-markup-fy15-cjs-and-thud)
Defense	Passed House (340-73) (https://beta.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-bill/4870/actions?q={%22search%22%3A(%22HR+4870%22)})	Approved by full committee (voice vote) (http://www.appropriations.senate.gov/news/committee approves-fy-2015-department-defense-appropriations-bill)
Energy and Water Development	Passed House (253-170) (http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2014/roll402.xml)	Approved by subcommittee (voice vote) (http://www.appropriations.senate.gov/news/fy15-energy-water-subcommittee-markup-bill-summary)
Financial Services and General Government	Passed (https://beta.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-bill/5016?q={%22search%22%3A(%22HR+5016%22)}) House (228-195) (https://beta.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-bill/5016?q={%22search%22%3A(%22HR+5016%22)})	Approved by subcommittee (voice vote) (http://www.appropriations.senate.gov/news/fy15-fsgg-subcommittee-markup-bill-summary)
Homeland Security	Approved by full committee (voice vote) (http://appropriations.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=384154)	Approved by full committee (voice vote) (http://www.appropriations.senate.gov/hearings-and-testimony/full-committee-markup-fy15-dhs)
Interior, Environment	Approved by full committee (29-19) (http://appropriations.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=387928)	Subcommittee hearings held
Labor, HHS, Education	Subcommittee hearings held	Approved by subcommittee (voice vote) (http://www.appropriations.senate.gov/news/fy15-lhhs-subcommittee-markup-bill-summary)
Legislative Branch	Passed House (402-14) (http://beta.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-bill/4487)	Approved by full committee (voice vote) (http://www.appropriations.senate.gov/hearings-and-testimony/full-committee-markup-fy15-sfops-leg-branch)
Military Construction, VA	Passed House (416-1) (http://beta.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-bill/4486)	Approved by full committee (30-0) (http://www.appropriations.senate.gov/hearings-and-testimony/full-committee-markup-allocations-milconva-agriculture)
State, Foreign Operations	Approved by full committee (voice vote) (http://appropriations.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=385712)	Approved by full committee (25-5) (http://www.appropriations.senate.gov/hearings-and-testimony/full-committee-markup-fy15-sfops-leg-branch)
Transportation, HUD	Passed House (229-192) (http://beta.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-bill/4745/actions)	Approved by full committee (29-1) (http://www.appropriations.senate.gov/hearings-and-testimony/full-committee-markup-fy15-cjs-and-thud)

Source: House Appropriations Committee, Senate Appropriations Committee, CQ

As we explained in [Appropriations 101 \(http://crfb.org/document/appropriations-101\)](http://crfb.org/document/appropriations-101), the House and Senate Appropriations Committees approve 302(b) spending levels

for each subcommittee after the topline 302(a) levels are determined by the Budget Committees. Below is an excerpt (click [here \(http://crfb.org/document/appropriations-101\)](http://crfb.org/document/appropriations-101) to read the full report).

How does Congress determine the total level of appropriations?

Under current law, after the President submits the Administration's budget proposal to Congress, the House and Senate **Budget Committees** are each directed to report a budget resolution, which if passed by their respective houses, would then be reconciled in a budget conference (see [Q&A: Everything You Need to Know About a Budget Conference \(http://crfb.org/document/qa-everything-you-need-know-about-budget-conference\)](http://crfb.org/document/qa-everything-you-need-know-about-budget-conference)). The resulting budget resolution, which is a concurrent resolution and therefore not signed by the President, includes what is known as a **302(a) allocation** that sets a total amount of money for the **Appropriations Committees** to spend.

If a concurrent budget resolution does not pass both chambers, each house then may adopt legislation "deeming" 302(a) allocations – a practice which has become increasingly common in recent years. For example, the recent Bipartisan Budget Act directed the Budget Committee Chairs in the House and Senate to set the 302(a) limit for FY2015 at \$1.014 trillion.

In addition, discretionary spending is currently subject to statutory spending caps. The Budget Control Act of 2011 set discretionary caps through 2021, which were modified for 2013, 2014, and 2015 by the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 and Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013. Beyond 2015, the statutory caps set by the Budget Control Act are reduced by about \$90 billion annually through an enforcement mechanism known as "sequestration" (see [Understanding the Sequester \(http://crfb.org/blogs/understanding-sequester\)](http://crfb.org/blogs/understanding-sequester)) implemented after the failure of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction to produce legislation to reduce the debt.

How does Congress allocate appropriations?

Once they receive 302(a) allocations, the House and Senate Appropriations Committees set 302(b) allocations to divide total appropriations among 12 subcommittees, each dealing with a different part of the budget. Those subcommittees must then decide how to distribute funds within their 302(b) allocations. These 302(b) allocations are voted on by the respective Appropriations Committees but are not subject to review or vote by the full House or Senate. The table below lists the FY2014 regular (non-war, non-disaster) appropriations, along with the President's budget request for FY2015 and House FY2015 302(b) allocations for each of the subcommittees. Each subcommittee must propose a bill that ultimately must pass both chambers of Congress and be signed by the President to take effect.

As you can see in the table below, both the House and Senate have agreed to overall discretionary spending levels, or 302(a) allocations, for FY2015 of \$1.014 trillion, consistent with the [Bipartisan Budget Act \(http://crfb.org/document/report-understanding-bipartisan-budget-act\)](http://crfb.org/document/report-understanding-bipartisan-budget-act) of 2013 (the Murray-Ryan agreement). However, the House, Senate, and President disagree, sometimes by small amounts, on the specific 302(b) allocations.

FY2015 Budget Authority Allocations to Appropriations Subcommittees (billions)			
Subcommittee	President's Budget	House	Senate
Agriculture	\$20.4	\$20.9	\$20.6
Commerce, Justice, Science	\$50.2	\$51.2	\$51.2
Defense	\$490.7	\$490.9	\$489.6
Energy and Water Development	\$33.7	\$34.0	\$34.2
Financial Services and General Government	\$22.9	\$21.3	\$22.5
Homeland Security	\$38.3	\$39.2**	\$39.0
Interior, Environment	\$29.5	\$30.2	\$29.5
Labor, HHS, Education	\$158.0	\$155.7	\$156.8
Legislative Branch	\$4.5	\$4.3	\$4.3
Military Construction, VA	\$71.9	\$71.5	\$71.9
State, Foreign Operations	\$42.7	\$42.4	\$39.7
Transportation, HUD	\$51.0	\$52.0	\$54.4
Total	\$1.014 trillion*	\$1.014 trillion	\$1.014 trillion

Source: House Appropriations Committee, Senate Appropriations Committee, CBO.

*This total does not include the \$55.4 billion of additional funding requested if legislation increasing statutory caps were adopted referred to as the Opportunity, Security, and Growth Initiative (OSGI) and a placeholder for Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO, or war funding) included outside regular appropriations in the President's FY2015 budget. The House and Senate allocations do not accommodate OSGI, but will be adjusted for OCO.

**This does not include a revision the House Appropriations Committee approved to allocate \$6.4 billion in disaster funds.

The largest difference between the House and Senate allocations is the State and Foreign Operations allocation, where the House approved an allocation of \$42.4 billion and the Senate only \$39.7 billion. However, this apparent difference is misleading since the Senate hides \$4.3 billion of additional State department funds by designating them as overseas contingency operations (OCO) funds -- an expensive [budget gimmick \(http://crfb.org/blogs/appropriators-must-stay-within-spending-caps-without-gimmicks\)](http://crfb.org/blogs/appropriators-must-stay-within-spending-caps-without-gimmicks) which allows to appropriators to circumvent the budget caps.

This gimmick was undertaken in response to a [re-estimate \(http://crfb.org/blogs/appropriators-must-stay-within-spending-caps-without-gimmicks\)](http://crfb.org/blogs/appropriators-must-stay-within-spending-caps-without-gimmicks) of FHA receipts that showed additional spending cuts would be necessary. Although we certainly understand the hard choices faced by appropriators this year, that does not excuse the use of budget gimmicks. The House budget resolution rightly [included \(http://crfb.org/blogs/how-house-passed-budget-tightens-defense-spending-caps\)](http://crfb.org/blogs/how-house-passed-budget-tightens-defense-spending-caps) bipartisan report language discouraging the use of this budget gimmick; Congress should not use OCO as a slush fund to cover base defense spending requests that it could not fund within the defense caps.

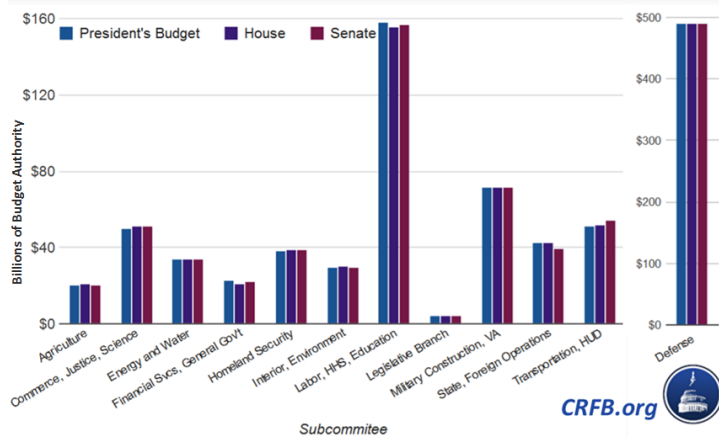
Transportation-HUD is another area where conflict may arise because the Senate allocated \$55.4 billion, while the President's budget set the level at \$51 billion, and the House approved \$52 billion. In effect, the House allocation will require other programs within the Transportation-HUD bill to absorb the costs of the lower FHA receipts, while the Senate allocation protects other programs from the impact of the lower FHA receipts by reducing allocations for State and Foreign Operations and shifting funds to the OCO account.

The Senate allocations provide for significantly higher outlays than the House allocations. In general, the budget authority (BA) allocations are what is determined by appropriations because appropriations bills primarily provide budget authority, and outlays are largely a function of the projected rate at which the new budget authority provided in appropriations bills will spend out and the amount of remaining spending from previous years' BA. Therefore, the difference in outlays could simply reflect faster spend-out rates, with higher outlays in fiscal year 2015 and lower outlays in subsequent years. However, the magnitude of the difference suggests that the Senate may be planning on complying with the limits in part through Changes In Mandatory Programs (CHIMPs) and rescissions of unobligated spending which reduce budget authority but do not produce any actual savings in the form of lower outlays.

One potential target for CHIMPS could be the often contentious Labor-HHS-Education bill. In addition to potential CHIMPs, and several regular controversial issues such as ACA funding, there is a disagreement on the size of the allocation. The House allocated \$155.7 billion, \$2.24 billion less than the President's request, while the Senate allocated \$156.8 billion.

The chart below provides a visual representation of the discretionary funding priorities of the House, Senate, and President. Please note that we have broken defense out separately so that the differences in allocations are more readable. Defense is significantly larger -- about \$490 billion -- than any of the other allocations.

FY2015 Appropriations Subcommittee Allocations



(http://crfb.org/sites/default/files/fy2015approps_ba_1.png)

We were glad to see Congress considering appropriations bills on schedule this year. However, it is important that Congress avoid budget gimmicks and stick to the discretionary funding limits in current law. If you have any questions about terminology or the appropriations process, please see our report [Appropriations 101](http://crfb.org/document/appropriations-101) (<http://crfb.org/document/appropriations-101>), and stay tuned to our [blog](http://crfb.org/category/blog-issue-areas/fy-2015-budget) (<http://crfb.org/category/blog-issue-areas/fy-2015-budget>) for continuing coverage.

Tags

[Appropriations \(/tags/appropriations/\)](/tags/appropriations/) | [FY 2015 Budget \(/tags/fy-2015-budget/\)](/tags/fy-2015-budget/)