

Background

During the evening of December 9th, 2014 the House of Representatives released a package of bills that would provide funding for most of the Federal Government through the end of Federal Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15). The legislation would fund all branches of the Government until September 30, 2015, except for the Department of Homeland Security. Homeland Security will receive a short-term extension until February 2015, which will allow Congress to debate a legislative and fiscal response to the President's announcement regarding executive action on immigration reform. The legislation must pass by the end of December 11th, when the current funding authorization is scheduled to expire. This omnibus bill was negotiated between the House and Senate, and is expected to pass both chambers and become law.

The fiscal appropriations package provides approximately \$1.01 trillion for Government operations through FY2015. This funding amount is consistent with the caps on discretionary appropriations that were created by the Budget Control Act of 2011 and modified by the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013. It is important to note that the appropriations bills deal with discretionary spending. Mandatory spending, which includes entitlements such as Medicaid, Medicare, and Social Security, are not set by the annual appropriations process. Therefore, the summaries of these spending measures will not include discussion of those programs.

Key Takeaways

Due to the limits on discretionary spending, many of the programs that serve senior citizens received level funding or slight decreases from FY2014. However, some programs that the President's budget recommended for reduction received level funding amounts instead of the proposed cuts. Notable items from the budget include:

- Senior Community Service Employment Program was level-funded at \$434 million, despite the President's Budget recommendation to reduce funding to \$380 million;
- Aging Network Support Activities received an increase of \$2.5 million, to a total of \$9.96 million. The legislation directs ACL to spend up to \$2.5 million of the increased funding on services for aging Holocaust survivors;
- Funding for Elder Rights Support Activities increased by \$4 million to \$7.84 million. The legislation indicates that the \$4 million increase is to create an Elder Justice Initiative that would provide competitive grants to states for projects that test elder abuse prevention and response methods. This project is funded instead of a new \$25 million line item for the Elder Justice Initiative that the President's budget requested;

- Aging and Disability Resource Center funds were level funded from the FY2014 discretionary appropriations at \$6.1 million; however, the total funding for ADRCs will decrease substantially due to the expiration of \$10 million in mandatory funding provided by the ACA;
- Social Services Block Grant funding was level at \$1.7 billion; and
- The budget did not include any funding for the White House Conference on Aging.

Please see the attached tables for a summary of key programs that impact services to older Americans.