Why Adding $4.2B to a Military Bill Means Less Money for HIV

Elsewhere in the Fiscal Year 2019 appropriations process, Congress attempts to restore order.

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Congress continues to gear up for what looks to be a much less tumultuous Fiscal Year 2019 appropriations process, if only to save their own seats in the upcoming midterm elections. Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Richard Shelby (R-AL) met with Senate leadership this week to lay out his plans to vote on twelve separate appropriations bills, one from each of the Senate Appropriations subcommittees, as opposed to considering an omnibus with all twelve bills packed into 1 as has been the case in the past several years. Shelby also intends to restore roll call voting in an effort to bring Democrats to the table for bipartisan bills to be passed free from ideological riders.

The House Appropriations Committee also has FY19 planning underway and released spending proposals this week for both the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies and the Legislative Branch subcommittees. Like last year, it seems that the Committee will release these subcommittee plans — called 302(b) allocations — one-at-a-time rather than all at once. The significant $4.2 billion increase written into the Military/VA bill means there will be less money for the Committee to allocate to the other subcommittees for their FY19 spending, including (and especially important for people living with and affected by HIV) the Labor-Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies subcommittee.

These moves in both chambers back toward regular appropriations order are largely due to the proximity of the November elections, but they also signal a desire not to test President Trump's threat that he would "never sign another bill like" the omnibus bill that he reluctantly signed back in March. Trying to heed his message while working on FY19, Congress is also having to consider the effects of a coming rescissions package. Director of the Office of Management and Budget Mick Mulvaney apparently told appropriators Wednesday that the cuts in the President's rescission package would not be above $25 billion, which would be well below the up to $60 billion in rescissions that had previous been reported. The proposal to change the bipartisan funding deal is widely seen as a non-starter, even for more fiscally conservative legislators, but there is still concern that while Congress is considering the plans presented by OMB, the availability of funds could be uncertain.

AIDS United is working diligently with our partners in Congress to ensure that programs supporting

people living with and affected by HIV either maintain or increase their funding and that such funding is provided in a timely manner. Keep an eye on our Policy Update for the most up-to-date info on all things federal budget and appropriations and how they could affect you.

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