Appropriators Review Federal Department Budgets

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This week, Congress is taking a back seat to the presidential primaries. The House is in recess, while the Senate passed the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, S. 524, to address the opioid epidemic. The measure passed the Senate 94 to 1.

Additionally the Senate is conducting budget hearings to move the federal appropriations process forward, by writing spending bills that can attain bipartisan support. There were nearly a dozen hearings, ranging the gamut of budget items. As HIV policy advocates, we are paying specific attention to The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development, and Related Agencies, (T-HUD), chaired by Senator Susan Collins (R-ME). The subcommittee conducted a hearing to review the Fiscal Year 2017 (FY 17) budget request and funding justification for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which has implications for the Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA) program.

The Hearing Panel was as Follows:

Panel I: The Honorable Julián Castro, Secretary, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Panel II: The Honorable David Montoya, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Meanwhile, Chairman Harold Rogers (R-KY) of the House Appropriations Committee has announced 26 separate hearings on FY 17 spending when the House returns to session on March 14th. The hearings are part of what will likely end up being hundreds of hearings in advance of writing this

year’s 12 spending bills. The first of the spending bills is expected to move before the House departs for another two-week break March 23rd.

The Washington Post reported that Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) said Tuesday: “Democrats do not plan to block the spending bills if Republicans maintain equal funding for military and domestic programs and steer clear of adding to the bills any controversial political policies, such as cutting off funding for the Affordable Care Act or blocking Obama’s executive orders on immigration.”

AIDS United will continue to monitor the process and advocate for robust funding for HIV programs, free of harmful policy riders. For questions, please reach out to Director of Government Affairs, Carl Baloney at cbaloney@aidsunited.org.

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