Both Parties Love (and Hate) Parts of the House-Passed Budget Bill

The bill could potentially lead to greater funds for HIV-related programs.

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Before leaving Washington for their six-week long summer recess, the House of Representatives passed a vital two-year budget deal last week, raising the caps on both defense and domestic spending and suspending the debt ceiling until the summer of 2021. With the House out of session, the legislation now moves over to the Senate, which will have until the end of this week to pass it before their recess begins.

The bill (H.R. 3877: Bipartisan Budget Act of 2019) would increase funding for both defense and non-defense discretionary (NDD) spending, with NDD programs seeing a $56.5 billion increase above current funding levels over the next two years. This increase in funding could potentially lead to Fiscal Year 2020 and 2021 appropriations bills that provide greater funding for a wide array of programs that benefit people living with and affected by HIV, such as the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program, the Housing Opportunities for People With AIDS (HOPWA) Program, the Center for Disease Control's Division of HIV Prevention, and many others. And, perhaps equally important is the fact that this legislation would put an end to the sequester imposed by the Budget Control Act of 2011, removing the threat of billions of dollars in automatic cuts to programs that benefit people living with HIV.

The Bipartisan Budget Act was passed by the substantial, if not resounding, margin of 284 to 149, with considerably more support from House Democrats than from their Republican counterparts. Only 16 Democrats voted against the spending deal, while roughly two-thirds of Republicans in the House opposed the legislation.

Despite the partisan discrepancy in support for the Bipartisan Budget Act, it would be shortsighted to declare one party the victor in this deal. A large number Senate Republicans are expected to vote for the bill next week and President Trump is said to supportive of the legislation as he has his eyes firmly trained on the 2020 election and wants to avoid the economic turmoil that would accompany the US government breaking the debt ceiling. And, while the majority of the Democratic Party's progressive wing voted in favor of the bill, they did so with a number of qualms about its contents, particularly around the increase in defense spending.

The mutual, if somewhat begrudging, support for the Bipartisan Budget Act is due in large part to

the efforts of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA-12) and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin. As we outlined earlier this month, Mnuchin and Pelosi had been working for several weeks on an agreement that they hoped both President Trump and House Democrats would support. Unlike other principal White House figures, like Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney and Acting Director of the Office of Management and Budget Russell Vought, Mnuchin was much more flexible in his negotiating style and was willing to raise NDD spending to levels to levels that were acceptable to Speaker Pelosi so long as the debt ceiling was raised.

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