Senate Stands Still on 2020 Budget as the July 4 Recess Arrives

But is the recently passed bill to fund the border crisis a sign that other progressive priorities will also be ignored?

July 2, 2019 By AIDS United

Ten down, two to go: Last week, the House passed another bill appropriating funds for fiscal year 2020, this time to federal departments relating to Financial Services. Although House appropriators did not reach Leader Steny Hoyer's (D-MD-5) goal of passing all twelve appropriations bills through the chamber by the end of June, only two final bills remain: Legislative Branch and Homeland Security. The Homeland Security bill in particular is expected to be a sticking point in the House's appropriations process, with House Democrats internally divided on how much — if any — funding should be allocated to agencies like Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) which have been under increased scrutiny in recent months for carrying out some of the administration's most egregious human rights violations against immigrants and asylum seekers at the Southern border.

Senate leaders have still yet to reach an agreement with the White House regarding budget caps, and Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) has barred appropriators from working on bills or "deeming" — that is, creating a working assumption of — a top-line budget cap and settling on a final number later in negotiations with the House. With no clear resolution between the Democratic-led House, Republican-controlled Senate, and White House in sight, a continuing resolution extending fiscal year 2019 funding levels for at least some parts of the government is likely.

The two chambers did, however, manage to pass a supplemental funding bill to address ongoing border issues. The House voted Thursday, June 27, to approve the Senate's $4.59 billion supplemental spending which the President is expected to sign into law without objection. The bill allocated an additional $2.88 billion to the Department of Health and Human Services for the care of unaccompanied minors who cross the border, among other uses. The House version of the bill included greater protections for children and families that did not pass in the Senate, forcing House leaders' hands in bringing the more conservative bill to the House floor for a vote in order to get any additional support to the border. The bill could be a portent of what's to come in a Homeland Security appropriations bill, with progressive House Democrats' priorities largely ignored in the name of compromise and passability.

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