Trump Wants to Take Back Nearly $60B in Agreed-Upon FY18 Funding

The rescission proposal would cut funds from nondiscretionary domestic programs such as the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program.

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It is perfectly normal to assume that the Fiscal Year 2018 appropriations package that was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Trump last month was a done deal. But, these are not normal times and the Trump administration has once again signaled their disdain for normal order by indicating that they may try to take back up to $60 billion of the agreed-upon funding through an infrequently used process called rescission.

President Trump made no secret of his distaste for the FY18 spending bill, going so far as threatening to veto the legislation hours before signing it. The President certainly wasn't alone in his reticence to support the bill, with more than 100 Republicans voting against the legislation and many more voting for it through gritted teeth. However, the President has found a much harder time finding allies in Congress who approve of using rescission to undo the deal that was already done, with even conservative deficit hawks disagreeing with his plan to reopen the debates on the FY18 funding, which Congress had been discussing since May 2017.

The Trump administration's rescission proposal has not been made public yet, but administration officials and congressional aides anticipate that the $60 billion in cuts will come from foreign aid and nondiscretionary domestic programs that had been targeted in the President's budget, which could include Ryan White funding, the Secretary's Minority AIDS Initiative Fund and various other federal HIV programs.

Adding to the Congressional confusion, the Senate Appropriations Committee that, along with its House counterpart, leads the charge on appropriating funding every year, is undergoing some leadership changes. With the recent retirement of Sen. Thad Cochran (R-MS), who served as the chairman for the committee from 2005–2007 and 2015–2018, a new Senate Appropriations head was needed. On Tuesday, Alabama Senator Richard Shelby (R) was chosen to fill the void left by Cochran's departure and lead the committee. Shelby has commented that he and the rest of the Senate are unlikely to consider President Trump's request to cut FY18 funding, reinforcing the importance that the legislators "keep [their] word" on the bipartisan budget deal from last month. Should Congressional Republicans side with President Trump and renege on their spending deal, it would likely obliterate any trust remaining between the 2 major parties, and with it, any chances

of Congress passing a meaningful appropriations package in the near future.

Sen. Cochran is replaced in the Senate, and on the Senate Appropriations Committee, by Cindy Hyde-Smith, Mississippi's first woman Senator. She will hold the seat until the November election; it is unclear yet if Sen. Hyde-Smith will run for election to remain in the position.

AIDS United will continue to work with our partners in the House and Senate to ensure that the level or increased funding appropriated to the Ryan White Program and other vital HIV-related funding streams in the FY18 bill will be maintained in the rescission talks to come. Check out our Policy Updates regularly for the latest news about all things HIV advocacy and funding.

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