

National Association of Area Agencies on Aging



LegislativeUPDATE

A MEMBER BENEFIT

Congress Speeds Short-Term Funding Bill to Passage

Late-Breaking Deal Includes Half-Percent Reduction to All Programs

September 30, 2016

Congress was able to avoid a government shutdown in the weeks preceding a national election by passing a temporary stopgap funding bill, known as a continuing resolution (CR), to keep the federal lights on until December 9. In a lame-duck session following the election, lawmakers will have roughly a month to agree on a strategy for the longer-term (and hopefully final) federal funding bills for FY 2017.

Facing a September 30 deadline to achieve a federal funding agreement for FY 17, lawmakers negotiated down to the wire on a strategy to provide disaster assistance funding to Flint, MI—a debate that stalled progress on the CR for several weeks. Once a solution to the Flint funding issue was achieved, the Senate and the House hustled the measure through bicameral approval and to

the President, who swiftly signed the measure into law. Neither chamber then wasted any time fleeing Washington to head back to their districts and states to campaign.

What's in the Continuing Resolution?

The CR funds federal agencies through December 9. In theory, the agreement simply continues FY 2016 funding levels into the first months of FY 17, and therefore prevents any policy or funding changes the House or Senate proposed for FY 17 from being implemented. However, there are a few exceptions that were included in the proposal to respond to recent national challenges and adjust spending levels to account for expiring cost-savings provisions in FY 2016.

The CR approves \$1.1 billion for Zika response and preparedness; \$500 million for Louisiana flood assistance; and full-year FY 17 funding for military construction and Department of Veterans Affairs. Additionally, because cost-savings measures—which are essentially savings gimmicks that were included in the final FY 16 funding bill—do not carry forward into FY 17, lawmakers had to reduce overall spending by 0.5 percent. This across-the-board reduction accounts for what would have been a \$5 billion difference between last-year's funding levels with last-year's built-in spending reductions and continuing last-year's funding after those reductions expired. This is a common budgetary practice, and overall funding levels may even out if Congress manages to finalize the remaining 11 funding bills later this fall.

Unknown at this point are details on how OAA and other aging program funding will be released during the CR period (October 1 through December 9. We will share details on any specific ACL/AoA allocation dynamics as we learn them.

Federal Funding Outlook Following the Election

Progress on FY 2017 appropriations this fall will likely depend on the outcome of the November election. If the Administration and/or the Senate change party affiliation, a lame-duck Congress may be reticent to make appropriations decisions before a new Congress and Administration take office in January. If that is the case, we could see either a series of short-term CRs, or a longer-term CR, extend into the first months of the new year. Alternatively, the current Congress may move to finish their work this year and achieve a deal on federal funding for the remainder of FY 2017. Such a deal would probably include a massive funding bill that lumps all agencies into one legislative package—known as an omnibus—or it could include a series of smaller, longer-term bills that lump some agencies together—called minibuses.

n4a and many other advocates in Washington are advocating for lawmakers to reach a deal for FY 17 appropriations following the election and to reject repeatedly extending FY 16 funding levels through continuing resolutions. Should the House and the Senate pursue this path, they would need to reconcile differences in each chamber's funding bill—including significant differences in funding levels proposed for Older Americans Act and other aging programs.

n4a has been talking to appropriators and staff to encourage them to accept the House-proposed funding levels for OAA programs, which include a number of modest, but important, increases to supportive services, meals and other OAA programs. The House bill also rejects Senate's elimination of the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) and cut to the OAA Title V SCSEP program.

More details about the FY 2017 funding bills for OAA and other aging programs proposed in the [House](#) and the [Senate](#) are available in our previous n4a *Legislative Updates*, as well as in our updated [n4a Appropriations Chart](#).

What Can Aging Advocates Do?

Passing a CR was important to avoid a government shutdown, but it is also critical that local advocates weigh in with lawmakers and stress the need to finish FY 2017 appropriations this year. It is also critical that we keep up the drumbeat about the need for funding increases for OAA and other aging programs. Stay tuned for updates about the FY 2017 appropriations process as they are available, and continue to **contact your Members of Congress with these important messages!**

This *Legislative Update* is an n4a membership benefit. For more information about these and other federal aging policy issues, please contact n4a's policy team: Amy Gotwals (agotwals@n4a.org) and Autumn Campbell (acampbell@n4a.org), 202.872.0888.

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*National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a)
1730 Rhode Island Ave., NW
Suite 1200
Washington, DC 20036*

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