

Published on *American Geosciences Institute* (<https://www.americangeosciences.org>)

Home > Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 raises budget caps and directs disaster relief funding to federal agencies

Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 raises budget caps and directs disaster relief funding to federal agencies

February 9, 2018

For the second time in 2018, the federal government went into a partial shutdown on February 9 – this time for just under nine hours – until President Trump signed H.R.1892 into law after passage by the Senate (71-28) and House of Representatives (240-186) earlier that morning. The bill funds the federal government at fiscal year (FY) 2017 levels until March 23, 2018, raises the budget caps for FY 2018 and FY 2019 by almost \$300 billion, increases the debt limit through March 1, 2019, and provides nearly \$90 billion in disaster relief for 2017 fires and hurricanes. Of the non-defense discretionary spending increase, \$20 billion is designated for infrastructure, including rural water and wastewater, clean and safe drinking water, rural broadband, energy and surface transportation projects. The new caps of \$579 billion for non-defense and \$629 billion for defense spending in FY 2018 should allow appropriators to construct a final omnibus bill for FY 2018 by March 23.

The over 600-page bill outlines extensive provisions affecting a broad array of industries and sectors, including the geosciences.

- To help offset increases in federal spending, the bill directs the sale of 100 million barrels of crude oil over fiscal years 2022-2027 from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR), a complex of underground caverns along the Gulf Coast created in the wake of the late 1970's oil crisis that hold 665 million barrels of emergency crude oil. The bill also calls for a sale of crude oil from the SPR in 2018, worth no more than \$350 million, to pay for upgrades to its infrastructure.
- The bill extends 48 different tax credits that expired at the end of 2016, including incentives related to mining safety, renewable energy sources (geothermal, small wind farms, fuel cells), nuclear power, bio fuels, and carbon capture initiatives.
- As Louisiana pursues an ambitious coastal restoration plan, the bill includes a Marine Mammal Protection Act waiver that limits the ability of federal officials to veto permits for Mid-Barataria and Mid-Breton Sound Sediment Diversions on the Mississippi River because of their potential impacts to groups of bottlenose dolphins.

The Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 includes millions of dollars of supplemental funding directed to certain federal agencies for disaster relief, which may also be used to help bolster their programs and equipment to improve disaster forecasting and response.

- U.S. Geological Survey
 - \$42 million for surveys, investigations, and research related to the consequences of 2017 hurricanes and wildfires
- National Science Foundation
 - \$16 million for repairs of damaged radio observatory facilities
- Department of Energy
 - \$13 million for electricity delivery and emergency reliability, including technical assistance related to electric grids
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
 - \$42 million for repair and replacement of observing assets, property, and equipment
 - \$18 million for marine debris assessment and removal
 - \$40 million for mapping, charting, and geodesy services
 - \$50 million to improve weather forecasting, hurricane intensity forecasting and flood forecasting and mitigation capabilities, including data assimilation from ocean observing platforms and satellites
 - \$50 million for improvements to operational and research weather supercomputing infrastructure, and for improvement of satellite ground services used in hurricane intensity and track prediction
- U.S. Department of Agriculture

- \$22 million for building and facilities under the Agricultural Research Service
- \$541 million for Watershed and Flood Prevention under the Natural Resources Conservation Service
- \$119 for the Forest Service relating to natural disaster expenses
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration
 - \$81 million for repairs at damaged facilities
- Environmental Protection Agency
 - \$6.2 million for necessary expenses to the Hazardous Substance Superfund
 - \$7 million for necessary expenses to the Leaking Underground Storage Tank Fund
 - \$50 million for the hazardous waste financial assistance grants program and for other solid waste management activities
 - Removing matching or cost share requirements of disaster-affected states or territories for capitalization grants of State Revolving Funds under Federal Water Pollution Control Act or Safe Drinking Water Act
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 - \$135 million for investigations related to flood and storm damage reduction
 - \$15 billion for construction to address emergency situations, and to repair damages
 - \$770 million for Mississippi River and Tributaries to address emergency situations, and to construct and repair damages
 - \$608 million for operation and maintenance to dredge federal navigation projects
 - \$810 million for Flood Control and Emergencies to prepare for flood, hurricane and other natural disasters and support emergency operations, repairs, and other activities
 - \$20 million to administer and oversee the disaster aid obligations and expenditures

Sources: Department of Energy, E&E News, Library of Congress, Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, New York Times
