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On April 10, the Senate ratified the selection of Senator Richard Shelby (R-AL) to chair the powerful Senate Appropriations Committee, following the resignation of former Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS) on April 1. First elected to the Senate in 1978, Senator Cochran had been the Republican leader of the Senate Appropriations Committee since 2005 and announced his resignation on March 5 due to medical complications. Before he officially retired, Congress passed the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018, significantly increasing both defense and non-defense spending caps.

Now the senior Republican member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Senator Shelby replaced Senator Cochran as Chair of the Subcommittee on Defense and handed over his previous chairmanship of the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies to Senator Jerry Moran (R-KS). Senator Moran will lead the charge in crafting the Senate Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies appropriations bill for fiscal year (FY) 2019, which includes funding for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP).

Membership of various appropriations subcommittees also shifted with Senator James Lankford (R-OK) joining the Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development and Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) joining the Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies. Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith, appointed by Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant to fill the seat vacated by former Senator Cochran, was sworn in as the state's first female senator on April 9 and joins the Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies and the Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies.

Sources: E&E News, U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee
