

House passes 8 remaining appropriations bills

September 14, 2017

The House passed eight remaining appropriations bills in a single package (H.R. 3354) on September 14 to provide all discretionary funding for the federal government in fiscal year (FY) 2018. H.R.3354 contains the full legislation and funding for all of the twelve annual appropriations bills. The House passed four of these bills, combined into H.R.3219, prior to the August recess.

The House package of eight bills, colloquially known as the “Octopus,” includes three bills which provide federal funding to the geosciences: Interior and Environment; Energy and Water; and Commerce, Justice, and Science. The House Committee on Appropriations largely rejected the deep spending cuts proposed in the President’s FY 2018 Budget Request, but many federal science agencies and programs would still see funding decreases from FY 2017 enacted levels based on the House legislation. In contrast, the Senate has only considered eight of their twelve appropriations bills at the committee level and has yet to pass any of the bills on the floor.

The first week of September, Congress passed a Continuing Resolution (CR) (H.R. 601) to continue funding the federal government past the end of fiscal year on September 30, effectively pushing back the deadline until December 8 to agree upon and pass all discretionary appropriations legislation for FY 2018. Both chambers must pass and reconcile all twelve appropriations bills individually, or pass and reconcile one or more spending packages, which must then be signed by the President before the December 8 deadline. If Congress or the President does not meet the deadline, Congress can pass another CR to keep federal agencies at their same funding levels from FY 2017 in order to avoid a government shutdown. While CRs enable federal government operations to continue at funding levels consistent with the previous fiscal year, this procedure results in uncertainty for agency spending plans and does not account for inflation or allow for new initiatives.

Sources: Library of Congress, U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
