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## Congress ends session by passing tax reform and continuing federal funding into January, but delays disaster aid

December 22, 2017

President Donald Trump signed H.R.1, a bill to provide for tax reform, into law on December 22. Passed under budget reconciliation procedures, Public Law No: 115-97 includes Senator Lisa Murkowski's (R-AK) provision directing the Secretary of the Interior to implement an oil and gas leasing program for the coastal plain (1002 Area) of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) in Alaska. The final bill did not contain the proposed, widely-unpopular provision repealing tax exemptions for graduate student tuition waivers, which House Rules Committee Chairman Pete Sessions (R-TX-32) and 30 Republican members of Congress strongly opposed in a letter to congressional leadership. The President also signed H.R.1370 into law to continue funding the federal government under fiscal year (FY) 2017 levels through January 19. By this date, Congress is due to pass appropriations legislation for FY 2018 and reauthorize the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

Lawmakers from various states impacted by hurricanes and wildfires this year were seeking billions more in disaster aid funding, but Congress stopped short of sending an \$81 billion relief package (H.R.4667) – the largest single outlay for disaster relief in U.S. history – to the President before the end of the year. On December 21, the House passed H.R.4667, which provides nearly double the \$44 billion request from the White House to fund programs that provide relief and recovery efforts to all of the communities affected, including those in California, Florida, Louisiana, Puerto Rico, Texas, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. However, the Senate delayed voting on H.R.4667 until January 2018. Highlights of the bill include appropriating \$27.6 billion to the Federal Emergency Management Agency for disaster response and recovery efforts, \$26.1 billion to the Community Development Block Grants-Disaster Recovery for housing, business, infrastructures, and mitigation needs for communities devastated by disasters in 2017 and prior years, and \$12.1 billion to the Army Corps of Engineers for repairs needed due to natural disasters and to expedite studies and ongoing projects to reduce damages in future disasters in areas affected by recent hurricanes.

*Sources: Congressman Pete Sessions, Library of Congress, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations, White House Office of Management and Budget*

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