

May 1, 2017

Background

Last night, Congress reached an agreement on a spending bill for FY2017. The consolidated omnibus appropriations bill text has been released, and will fund the government through the end of September 2017. FY2017 began on October 1st of this year, but the government has been operating under a series of short-term spending authorizations pending this comprehensive appropriations package.

Throughout last summer, drafts of appropriation bills were released with several proposed cuts to domestic programs – including those that serve older adults and persons with disabilities. Most notably, proposals included elimination of the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) as well as a \$34 million reduction to the Senior Community Service Employment (SCSEP) program. Following the election of President Trump, the Administration released an abbreviated budget document that also proposed reductions a number of programs, including elimination of SCSEP.

As a reminder, many of the federal government’s largest expenses are mandatory expenditures, such as Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare, and, as such, are not subject to the annual appropriations process. Therefore, the budget does not include any substantive funding or major policy changes to these programs.

The current government funding bill expires at the end of this week. Final passage of this omnibus bill is expected before that expiration occurs. The legislation has been negotiated between both parties in each of the Congressional chambers and will likely be enacted into law.

Key Takeaways

The legislation negotiated includes some targeted and modest increases to certain programs under the Older Americans Act; however, there are offsetting reductions to a number of other programs. In short, the bill creates some distinct “winners” and “losers” within the aging and disability services community.

Please see the attached chart for summaries of proposed funding levels of many programs important to seniors and people with disabilities. In addition to the tables, **National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities** www.nasuad.org

we highlight several areas where the FY2016 budget provides additional funding for programs that serve seniors and people with disabilities.

Key programs under the Administration for Community Living (ACL) with funding increases included:

- **Senior Nutrition.** Over the past several years, nutrition has received some substantial increases. This appropriations bill includes modest increases for both congregate (\$2 million increase) and home delivered meals (\$1 million increase);
- **HCBS Supportive Services.** This program was funded at \$350 million, which is a \$2.5 million increase from FY2016 levels;
- **Elder Rights and Adult Protective Services.** Congress has again provided funding increases for these activities, increasing the appropriations by \$2 million to a total of \$13.87 million.

The National Institutes of Health also received substantial funding increases for research and support on Alzheimer's disease and related dementia. The appropriations bill provides nearly \$1.4 billion, a \$400 million increase, which includes funding for dementia care and services research along with biomedical research.

Unfortunately, the legislation also includes several notable and substantial reductions to programs under ACL and the Older Americans Act. This includes programs previously targeted for cuts, at the following amounts:

- \$34 million reduction to SCSEP from a total of \$434 million to \$400 million, representing a nearly 8% cut to the program;
- \$5 million of reduced funding for SHIP to \$47 million, which is a 9.6% reduction.

The legislation also proposes several minor cuts to TA centers, such as the limb loss resource center (-\$300,000) and the paralysis resource center (-\$1 million).

It is important to note that proposals to eliminate SHIP and SCSEP were not enacted, which will preserve the overall programs and provide opportunity to work towards restoration of these cuts in the future. However, the reductions to SCSEP and SHIP are disappointing and will certainly result in a service cuts. This is particularly undesirable at a time when the number of individuals eligible for such services is increasing dramatically. NASUAD will continue to educate Congress on the value of these programs and we hope that future funding bills will reflect the growing need for services.