

**October 29, 2015****One Down, One to Go—Budget Deal Done, Omnibus and Family Planning Funding Pending**

Earlier this week, a two-year budget and debt ceiling agreement unexpectedly emerged from backroom negotiations between the White House and the bipartisan leadership of the House and Senate. The deal paves the way for an orderly completion of the fiscal year 2016 appropriations process. But an approved budget deal lifting discretionary spending caps is just the first step—albeit a critical one—in a two-step process to fund the government for the remainder of the fiscal year before the continuing resolution (CR), currently keeping the federal government running, expires on December 11.

For FY 2016, the budget deal provides relief from sequester caps contained in a deficit reduction plan enacted in 2011 during the first episode of budget and fiscal brinksmanship under the newly-elected Republican-controlled Congress. The agreement allows for an additional \$66 billion in discretionary funding, \$50 billion split equally between defense and non-defense discretionary (NDD) programs and \$16 billion in “overseas contingency operations” (OCO) funding divided in like manner.

An analysis by the U.S. Global Leadership Coalition (USGLC) estimates that as much as \$3.2 billion more might be available for overall international affairs programs, including bilateral and multilateral family planning and reproductive health (FP/RH), than was approved in FY 2015, assuming that the percentage increase for NDD programs was allocated proportionally based on international affairs programs’ current share of total NDD spending.

As explained in greater detail in USGLC’s analysis, how large that potential increase in funding for international affairs programs might be—and how any increase might filter down to the FP/RH line-item—is difficult to predict and subject to number of complicated factors, the largest being the final split between base and OCO appropriations that will be agreed to.

However, it would be reasonable to assert that an increase in base funding will provide more headroom for family planning champions to move the final FY 2016 appropriated level for FP/RH programs closer to the President’s budget request of \$612.6 million, the amount contained in the Senate committee-approved version of the State Department-foreign operations appropriations bill, during negotiations on an omnibus spending package. To accomplish that result will require Senate champions to bridge a more than \$150 million gap from the disastrously-low House level of \$461 million, while at the same time blocking their House counterparts from attaching destructive policy “riders” on the Global Gag Rule and the United Nations Population Fund to the omnibus.

Yesterday, the House adopted the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 (H.R. 1314) on a vote of 266 to 167 with 187 Democrats (all of those present and voting) joining 79 Republicans—only one-third of the GOP caucus. The Senate is expected to pass the bill in the next few days once procedural hurdles are surmounted, hopefully quickly enough that the prospect of exceeding the debt limit early next week does not roil global financial markets. The president will sign the bill as soon as it lands on his desk.

Once the bill is enacted and a top-line discretionary spending total set, the leadership of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees will divvy up the higher funding amount among the 12 individual spending bills (revised 302(b) allocations). Then, subcommittees like the State-Foreign Operations Subcommittee, which handles global development and health assistance, will go about negotiating funding levels and policy provisions for each program.

House and Senate appropriators will begin working to negotiate an omnibus spending package, assembled from the dozen subcommittee bills. According to a well-informed source, Senate appropriators have been instructed to complete their negotiations on an omnibus before Thanksgiving, well ahead of the December 11 expiration date for the current CR. While passage of the budget deal will increase the likelihood that an omnibus spending package can be enacted in such a timely way, success is not certain. And if history is any guide, international FP/RH funding and policy will be among the last items to be resolved in the State-foreign operations title of an omnibus spending package.

Stay tuned for further developments.