

Appropriations 101

Frequently Asked Questions

- (1) **How is the Federal Government's Funding Divided and Who Are the Key Decision Makers On Where the Funding Goes?** Key congressional decisionmakers in the appropriations process are the members of the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations, which are divided into 12 subcommittees. For refugee and immigration issues, efforts typically focus on four subcommittees:
 - Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS). Oversees funding for the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement, which serves refugees, unaccompanied children, trafficking victims, and other populations.
 - Homeland Security (DHS). Covers the Department of Homeland Security's funding, including key items on immigration enforcement and border security.
 - State and Foreign Operations and Related Programs (SFOPS). Oversees funding for the Department of State that addresses the root causes of migration, including funding for development, anti-trafficking and disaster relief projects, as well as funding for initial reception and placement into the U.S. refugee resettlement program.
 - Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies (CJS). Considers funding for the Department of Justice's Executive Office of Immigration Review, which houses the immigration courts, as well as legal assistance and orientation programs for immigrants.
- (2) **What is an Omnibus?** While Congress can and has traditionally considered and approved each of the 12 appropriation committee bills separately, it may also combine the bills into a single large or "omnibus" bill.
- (3) **What is a Continuing Resolution?** A continuing resolution (CR) allows Congress to provide temporary funding for agencies or programs (typically, at the rate from the previous fiscal year). A CR is often used when the regular appropriations bills are not enacted by the start of the fiscal year (October 1st). CRs can vary in length from a few days to the remainder of the fiscal year.
- (4) **What is Report Language?** Congress usually provides more detail on the funding appropriated, setting forth oversight and limitations to the agencies for specific accounts and programs, in the report language. While this report language is not binding law, it reflects the legislative intent of Congress, and agencies generally adhere to the directives set forth within the language.
- (5) **Why Is the Appropriations Process Important?** In addition to funding vital services for refugees and other vulnerable populations, the appropriations process often determines the extent to which other immigration- and refugee-related policies and enforcement efforts can be implemented.
- (6) **How Can I learn More?** For more information on our specific appropriations priorities and asks, please see our Justice for Immigrants website at: justiceforimmigrants.org.