



NATIONAL COALITION for HOMELESS VETERANS

1730 M St., NW Suite 705

Washington, DC 20036

202-546-1969 / 800-VET-HELP

Website: www.nchv.org Email: info@nchv.org

Hill Watch: Appropriations Deadline Nears

Congress confronts a time limit on funding for FY 2017

The 2017 Fiscal Year may be more than half over, but Congress has yet to set the final funding levels for most of the government. Running from Oct. 1st of 2016 to Sept. 30th of 2017, FY 2017 so far has seen two continuing resolutions (CR's) which extend the deadline for Congress to act on finalizing the budget by setting the spending levels for most of the government at flat rates, based on the previous year's funding level.

As the original deadline approached in September of last year, Congress decided to pass a CR for most of the government in order to make spending decisions after the presidential election. That initial CR continued federal funding until Dec. 9, 2016. When that deadline arrived, Congress again passed a CR to carry the same spending levels through until Apr. 28, 2017 in order to give the new Administration to weigh in on the budget process. That Apr. 28 deadline is fast approaching now, and Congress must fund the government between when they return from recess on the 24th of April and the expiration of the CR four days later.

You'll notice the use of the phrase "most of the government" used several times above; this is because Congress did pass legislation to set the final funding levels for FY 2017 for one area of government – veterans' affairs. This included many of the programs which are considered the pillars of the federal response to the problem of homelessness among veterans. You can read more about those final funding numbers by clicking here and reading a Hill Watch from late last year.

(http://www.nchv.org/images/uploads/Hill_Watch_CR_2016-2017.pdf)

So what is likely to happen when Congress returns to confront the funding deadline? What funding levels will programs that bear directly on homelessness among veterans, like HVRP and HUD-VASH, receive through this process?

Congress has been fairly quiet about these questions in public, recently. Not many members are speaking to the press and the bills which govern HVRP and HUD-VASH spending have not yet been made public in the final forms. NCHV can, however, provide a rough idea of the possible scenarios that may play out in the coming weeks.

Because of the short turn around between when Congress returns and the deadline, the most precious commodity in this process is Senate floor time. This limited amount of floor time may mean that passing each of the separate, remaining appropriations bills is unfeasible. If this is true, Congress may decide to:

- wrap all of the remaining bills together into an "omnibus" bill that provides new and specific levels of funding for FY 2017, or
- wrap related bills together into several "minibuses" that also provide new and specific levels of funding for FY 2017, or
- resort to a short term CR that will last a few days to a few weeks to allow themselves time to do one of the above, or
- resort to a yearlong CR that continues the flat funding from last year all the way through the rest of FY 2017.



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And while any of those scenarios are possible, it is not possible at this time to say which will take place. It is also not possible to say what the funding levels for HVRP or HUD-VASH will be when the process is finished. To learn more about where negotiations left off on these programs at the end of the previous Congress, click here to read a Policy and Legislative Update from NCHV from December, 2016. (http://www.nchv.org/images/uploads/Policy_and_Legislative_Update_-_NovDec2016.pdf)

As always, keep checking Hill Watch for information as it becomes available.