

House Unveils Continuing Resolution

House Appropriations Chair Proposes Drama-Free bill, Analysts say Congress Likely to Pass It

Late Tuesday, House Appropriations Chairman Hal Rogers (R-Ky) [introduced](#) a short-term Continuing Resolution (CR), [H. J. Res 124](#), to keep the government operating through the fall. The CR aims to prevent another government shutdown at the end of the current fiscal year by providing funding through December 11. Congress will have to return during a lame duck session after the elections to pass a longer funding bill for the remainder of FY15.

The House CR caps funding for programs and services at an annual rate of \$1.012 trillion, barely below last year's spending levels. Chairman Rogers lauds the bill for being free of controversial riders and not seeking to make any changes to existing federal policies.

"[T]his is a temporary, imperfect measure that does not reflect the changing needs of the nation or new budget priorities. In order to adequately address the country's real and urgent budgetary requirements, it is imperative that Congress fulfill its Constitutional duty and enact actual, line-by-line Appropriations legislation for the next fiscal year," Chairman Rogers said in a press release.

While the bill is largely clean, it does include certain "anomalies," including two provisions for the Department of Energy. The first provides DOE some flexibility with regards to its Portsmouth site, allowing Uranium Enrichment Decontamination and Decommissioning Funds to be allocated at the rate necessary to avoid disrupting continuing projects.

The second concerns recovery at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) near Carlsbad, New Mexico. Last February, a storage drum containing radioactive material ruptured, causing a spill in the underground portion of the repository and a leak into the above-ground environment. The CR unveiled Tuesday allows funds to be obligated at a rate to assure the necessary activities to restore and upgrade the repository. The exact language can be found below:

"SEC. 121. (a) Funds made available by section 101 for "Department of Energy--Energy Programs--Uranium Enrichment Decontamination and Decommissioning Fund" may be apportioned up to the rate for operations necessary to avoid disruption of continuing projects or activities funded in this appropriation. (b) The Secretary of Energy shall notify the Committees on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Senate not later than 3 days after each use of the authority provided in subsection (a).

SEC. 122. (a) Funds made available by section 101 for "Department of Energy--Environmental and Other Defense Activities--Defense Environmental Cleanup" for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant may be obligated at a rate for operations necessary to assure timely execution of activities necessary to restore and upgrade the repository. (b) The Secretary of Energy shall notify the Committees on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Senate on each use of the spending rate authority provided in this section that exceeds customary apportionment allocations."

Funding for other DOE activities, including NNSA, remains at FY14 appropriations levels.

Analysts expect a CR to pass, despite some clamoring about extending the authorization for the Export-Import Bank, lack of provisions addressing immigration policy, and the length of the CR. While many in Congress had hoped to address other items, Congressional leadership is eager to avoid having their members take tough votes before the election. The House could vote on the bill as early as Thursday, September 11.

On the Senate side, Appropriations Chairwoman Barbara Mikulski (D-Md) said she is also looking to pass a clean CR as soon as possible.