

ECA Update: December 10, 2014

Full Year Spending Bill Released, Likely to be Passed by Congress



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Full Year Spending Bill Released

After hitting a slight snag in negotiations earlier this week, congressional appropriations leaders unveiled their compromise spending bill funding the government for the remainder of Fiscal Year (FY) 2015. The bill, which has come to be known by the moniker 'CROmnibus,' totals some \$1.1 trillion and includes 11 appropriations bills bundled into a single legislative package. Normally such a package, an omnibus, would include 12 bills but congressional Republicans, smarting from President Obama's unilateral action on immigration in November, have decided to only fund the Department of Homeland Security until late February using a continuing resolution (CR). Congress will likely not pass the bill before the current deadline of December 11, necessitating another short-term funding measure and possibly extending the lame-duck session by another week.

The Energy and Water Development section of the spending bill allocates \$27.9 billion to the Department of Energy (DOE). \$11.4 billion has been appropriated to the National Nuclear Security Agency (NNSA), \$200 million above what was enacted last year. Included in DOE's spending is \$914 million for nuclear energy research and development and continuation of prior year funding for Yucca Mountain to maintain the sites viability and to complete the next volume if its safety evaluation report.

The continued construction Mixed Oxide (MOX) Fuel Fabrication Facility has been allocated \$345 million. NNSA is prohibited from using any of that money to put the project in cold standby and must submit a report on the lifecycle cost estimate for the option of completing and operating the Facility and for the option of downgrading and disposing of MOX fuel in a repository.

The Office of Nuclear Energy has been appropriated \$913.5 million for the year. Included in language funding the office is a requirement that DoE set up a nuclear working group among national laboratories to foster "collaboration and identification of nuclear capabilities." The language also requires this group to aid the Secretary in updating the Nuclear Research, Development, and Demonstration Roadmap.

Environmental Management's total budget has increased by some \$260 million over the \$5.8 billion that was enacted last year. That includes \$246 million for non-defense environmental cleanup and more than \$5 billion for defense environmental cleanup. That includes \$941 million for the Hanford site, \$1.2 billion for the Office of River Protection, #233 million for the Oak Ridge Reservation, and \$320 million for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP). A provision of the bill prevents WIPP money from being used to fund incident recovery or transuranic waste activities at any other site. The Department has

also been directed to provide a separate accounting of all funds for the WIPP recovery plan its budget request for FY16. The Energy Secretary is also directed to designate an official to be responsible for implementing that plan.

In a joint statement, House Appropriations Chair Hal Rogers (R-KY) and Senate Appropriations Chair Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) lauded the final agreement.

"After months of thorough, business-like, sometimes tough but always civil negotiations, we have reached a responsible, bipartisan and bicameral agreement on funding for government operations for 2015. More than two months into the fiscal year, it's time we end government on autopilot so we can turn our focus to meeting the day to day needs of Americans and long-range needs of the nation.

"This bill fulfills our constitutional duty to fund the government, preventing damage from shutdown politics that are bad for the economy, cost jobs and hurt middle class families. While not everyone got everything they wanted, such compromises must be made in a divided government. These are the tough choices that we must make to govern responsibly and do what the American people sent us here to do.

"As we close in on our December 11 deadline, we now ask that the House and Senate take up and pass this bill as soon as possible, and that the President sign it when it reaches his desk. The American people deserve the certainty of a continuously functioning and responsible government, and the knowledge that both parties in Congress have heard their demands and have worked cooperatively on their behalf."