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**Appropriations**

With the start of the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress, appropriators on both sides of the Capitol are hoping this year's appropriations process follows a more "regular order." What does this mean? Ideally, both the House and Senate will take up as many of the twelve appropriations measures prior to September 30, the end of the current Fiscal Year (FY), as possible.

The newly appointed Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Thad Cochran (R-MS), has made a point in recent weeks to stress that he wants all of the twelve FY 2016 spending bills to be open to amendments, and receive consideration on the floor. He has acknowledged it may not be possible to pass all twelve bills individually, some may have to be packaged, but he at least wants some consideration of each on the floor. Given the ever-present funding challenges and deep policy divides in the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (Labor-HHS) appropriations bill, which includes the Social Security Administration's (SSA) administrative funding, it's safe to assume SSA's Limitation on Administrative Expenses (LAE) account will be included in one of those packages.

Returning House Appropriations Committee Chairman Hal Rogers (R-KY-5<sup>th</sup>), has echoed the same sentiment, stressing he wants to openly consider and move all 12 spending bills before October 1, and within budget.

This ambitious agenda will most likely be much more difficult for Chairman Cochran to achieve than for Chairman Rogers. With Republicans holding one of the largest majorities in the House in recent generations, Chairman Rogers should have a much easier time moving most of the spending bills through committee and the floor than Chairman Cochran. Even with the large majority, some of the more contentious nondefense bills such as Labor-HHS and Interior-Environment may still prove difficult for Chairman Rogers to secure votes on.

Chairman Cochran's most obvious challenge in moving the spending bills is the reality Republicans hold only a small majority in the Senate, meaning they will need votes from moderate Democrats to reach the 60-vote hurdle. In addition, Senate Republicans are divided on a number of the spending measures.

In the end this all becomes somewhat a game of balancing Republican priorities in the spending bills with the reality they probably do not have the votes necessary to overcome a presidential veto.

The entire spending/budget process for the year will begin with the release of the President's FY 2016 Budget Request to Congress on Monday, February 2. The Budget Request advanced by President Obama will provide an idea of the administration's priorities, and the start of a funding framework for many programs. Early reports from the White House indicate President Obama will seek to reverse the spending caps created by sequestration, and propose to spend roughly \$74 billion more than the current statutory limits set by the Budget Control Act of 2011. About half of the increase would go towards defense, and the other half towards non-defense.

### **Committee Rosters of Interest**

With the start of a new Congress, there have been changes in many of the Senate and House Committees that are of interest to NCSSMA. Below are rosters for the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress of some of the Committees and Subcommittees of particular note:

#### **Senate Labor-HHS Appropriations Subcommittee**

Roy Blunt (R-MO), Chairman	Patty Murray (D-WA), Ranking Member
Jerry Moran (R-KS)	Richard Durbin (D-IL)
Richard Shelby (R-AL)	Jack Reed (D-RI)
Thad Cochran (R-MS)	Barbara Mikulski (D-MD)
Lamar Alexander (R-TN)	Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH)
Lindsey Graham (R-SC)	Jeff Merkley (D-OR)
Mark Kirk (R-IL)	Brian Schatz (D-HI)
Bill Cassidy (R-LA)	Tammy Baldwin (D-WI)
Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV)	
James Lankford (R-OK)	

#### **Senate Finance Committee**

Orrin Hatch (R-UT), Chairman	Ron Wyden (D-OR), Ranking Member
Charles Grassley (R-IA)	Charles Schumer (D-NY)
Mike Crapo (R-ID)	Debbie Stabenow (D-MI)
Pat Roberts (R-KS)	Maria Cantwell (D-WA)
Michael Enzi (R-WY)	Bill Nelson (D-FL)
John Cornyn (R-TX)	Robert Menendez (D-NJ)
John Thune (R-SD)	Thomas Carper (D-DE)
Richard Burr (R-NC)	Ben Cardin (D-MD)
Johnny Isakson (R-GA)	Sherrod Brown (D-OH)
Rob Portman (R-OH)	Michael Bennet (D-CO)
Patrick Toomey (R-PA)	Robert Casey (D-PA)
Dan Coats (R-IN)	Mark Warner (D-VA)
Dean Heller (R-NV)	
Tim Scott (R-SC)	

**Senate Special Committee on Aging**

Susan Collins (R-ME), Chairwoman  
Orrin Hatch (R-UT)  
Mark Kirk (R-IL)  
Jeff Flake (R-AZ)  
Bob Corker (R-TN)  
Dean Heller (R-NV)  
Tim Scott (R-SC)  
Tom Cotton (R-AR)  
David Perdue (R-GA)  
Thom Tillis (R-NC)  
Ben Sasse (R-NE)

Claire McCaskill (D-MO), Ranking Member  
Bill Nelson (D-FL)  
Robert Casey (D-PA)  
Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI)  
Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY)  
Richard Blumenthal (D-CT)  
Joe Donnelly (D-IN)  
Elizabeth Warren (D-MA)  
Tim Kaine (D-VA)

**House Labor-HHS Appropriations Subcommittee**

Tom Cole (R-OK-4<sup>th</sup>), Chairman  
Mike Simpson (R-ID-2<sup>nd</sup>)  
Steve Womack (R-AR-3<sup>rd</sup>)  
Chuck Fleischmann (R-TN-3<sup>rd</sup>)  
Andy Harris (R-MD-1<sup>st</sup>)  
Martha Roby (R-AL-2<sup>nd</sup>)  
Charlie Dent (R-PA-15<sup>th</sup>)  
Scott Rigell (R-VA-2<sup>nd</sup>)

Rosa DeLauro (D-CT-3<sup>rd</sup>), Ranking Member  
Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA-40<sup>th</sup>)  
Barbara Lee (D-CA-13<sup>th</sup>)  
Chaka Fattah (D-PA-2<sup>nd</sup>)

**House Ways and Means Committee  
Subcommittee on Social Security**

Sam Johnson (R-TX-3<sup>rd</sup>), Chairman  
Jim Renacci (R-OH-16<sup>th</sup>)  
Vern Buchanan (R-FL-16<sup>th</sup>)  
Aaron Schock (R-IL-18<sup>th</sup>)  
Tom Reed (R-NY-23<sup>rd</sup>)  
Todd Young (R-IN-9<sup>th</sup>)  
Mike Kelly (R-PA-3<sup>rd</sup>)

Xavier Becerra (D-CA-34<sup>th</sup>), Ranking Member  
Lloyd Doggett (D-TX-35<sup>th</sup>)  
John Larson (D-CT-1<sup>st</sup>)  
Earl Blumenauer (D-OR-3<sup>rd</sup>)

### **House Rule Change**

One of the first legislative actions led by House Republicans in the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress was passage of a rule making it much more difficult to shift funds from Social Security's Retirement Trust Fund to fill shortfalls in the Disability Trust Fund.

Specifically, the rule creates a point of order against any such bill that does not improve the "actuarial balance" of the combined funds. The shifting of funds from one Trust Fund to another is a mechanism that has been used on numerous occasions in the past to help rebalance the Trust Funds.

Not surprisingly, this has started a firestorm of debate about Social Security both on and off Capitol Hill. Republicans see this as perhaps a way forward to "fixing" the Disability program. Liberals have accused Republicans of trying to "cull the weak from the herd" by pitting the disabled against pensioners and perhaps ultimately undermining the larger Social Security coalition.

Many believe this will make the Social Security Disability program a hotbed issue in FY 2016, and open up debate in FY 2017 related to the Social Security program as a whole. This is an issue that bears close monitoring and NCSSMA may receive questions in our interactions with legislators and staff.

### **Veterans Sick Leave Bill**

This past week, the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, by a voice vote, unanimously approved the Wounded Warriors Federal Leave Act, H.R. 313. The bill was introduced by Stephen Lynch (D-MA-8<sup>th</sup>) on January 13, 2015. The legislation would allow new federal employees with at least a 30 percent disability rating related to military service, 104 hours of paid sick leave when they begin their federal employment. A letter was sent to Capitol Hill from the Federal-Postal Coalition (FPC) supporting the bill. NCSSMA, as a member of FPC signed on to the letter. Companion legislation has been introduced in the Senate.

This bill was also introduced during the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, and NCSSMA supported the legislation through both the FPC and the Government Managers Coalition (GMC).

### **Senator Coburn Pushes for SSA Fraud Charges as He Exits**

Former Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK) ended his career as a U.S. Senator in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, but before he left in December, he introduced S. 3003, the Protecting Social Security Disability Act of 2014. The bill, if enacted would have a significant impact on the Disability Insurance program. Because this bill was introduced in the last Congress, and did not become law, it would need to be reintroduced in the current Congress if there is interest in moving it forward. We will monitor and advise NCSSMA appropriately.

Below is a link that provides excerpts from S. 3003:

[http://socsecnews.blogspot.com/2014/12/coburns-parting-shot\\_23.html](http://socsecnews.blogspot.com/2014/12/coburns-parting-shot_23.html)

Additionally of note, Senator Coburn, who led a Congressional investigation into alleged disability fraud at Huntington's SSA office, delivered a final round of criticism aimed at Department of Justice officials for not prosecuting those involved. His remarks were delivered from the Senate floor in December as the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress was winding down.

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