



**Global Health
Advocacy Incubator**



U.S. Federal Appropriations Action Guide

A resource for advocates on how to navigate
the federal budget and appropriations process

Disclaimer

This guide is intended for informational and educational purposes only. It does not constitute legal or financial advice and should not be relied upon as such. Policies, procedures and timelines may change. Consult official congressional and agency resources for the most current information.

About

The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids is the leading advocacy organization working to reduce tobacco use and its deadly consequences in the United States and around the world. Through our Global Health Advocacy Incubator, we tackle other critical public health challenges across the globe—including food and nutrition policy, injury and overdose prevention, and building resilient and equitable health systems. Our vision is a healthier and more equitable future for all.

For more information about GHAI, visit www.advocacyincubator.org

For more information on GHAI's Health Advocacy Training and Collaboration Hub, visit <https://learn.hatchadvocacy.org/learn>

About the Overdose Prevention Initiative

Since launching in October 2021, the Overdose Prevention Initiative at GHAI has become a leading resource for advocates seeking to advance federal measures to prevent overdose fatalities and reduce substance use disorders. The Global Health Advocacy Incubator's Overdose Prevention Initiative advocates to ensure that evidence-based treatment and harm reduction services that help save lives from drug overdose are within reach. By advancing federal policies that expand access to addiction treatment and recovery, support community-based strategies and advance data-driven solutions, we can make a difference in the lives of people across the U.S. and prevent needless overdose deaths.

For more information on the Overdose Prevention Initiative at GHAI, visit <https://www.advocacyincubator.org/program-areas/injury-prevention/overdose-prevention>

A special thank you to Bloomberg Philanthropies for funding the Overdose Prevention Initiative.

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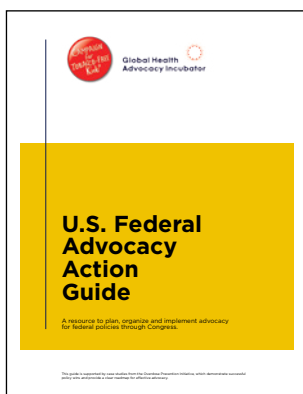
About this Action Guide

This Action Guide equips public health advocates, national organizations and community leaders to understand and shape the federal budget and appropriations process. Use this guide as both an educational resource and a hands-on action tool.

- Learn the process:** Review the sections on timelines, key players and terms to build foundational knowledge.
- Plan your advocacy:** Use the sample letters, example talking points and testimony templates to prepare effective outreach to Congress and agencies.
- Engage strategically:** Identify the key moments in the budget cycle when you can influence funding outcomes.
- Track developments:** Reference the included links to official resources to track developments in real time.

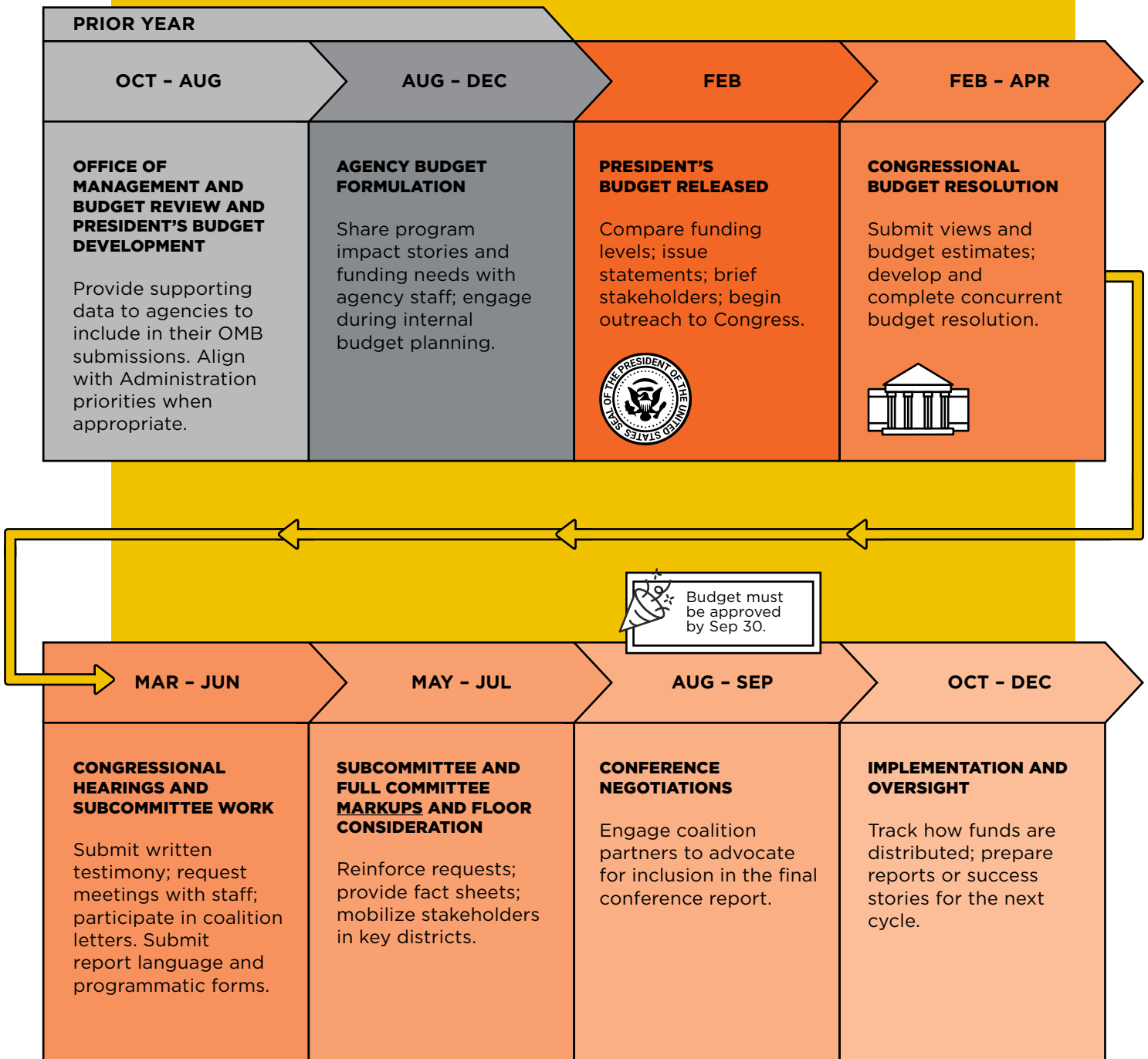
Glossary Terms

Throughout the document there are underlined words. The definition of these words can be found in the glossary at the end of the guide.



This document was designed to be used with the [GHAU.S. Federal Advocacy Guide](#). A resource to plan, organize and implement advocacy for federal policies through Congress.

Advocacy Opportunities Throughout the Appropriations Cycle:



PART I: Understanding the Federal Budget and Appropriations Process

Every year, the federal government decides how to spend trillions of dollars across agencies and programs. This process—known as federal appropriations—is at the heart of how the government functions. It determines everything from medical research funding and public health grants to defense spending and disaster relief.

While the process follows a predictable timeline, it can also be disrupted by politics, economic conditions and national events. For everyday citizens, advocates and others outside government, understanding how and when federal funding decisions are made is essential to effective engagement.

This Action Guide was created to provide a clear, practical roadmap to the budget and appropriations process. Our goal for this guide is to provide you with a better understanding of:

- **How the federal budget connects to annual appropriations**
- **The difference between authorization, appropriations and mandatory versus discretionary spending**
- **When and how Congress allocates spending**
- **What roles the President, Congress and agencies play**
- **How continuing resolutions, omnibus bills and supplemental appropriations work**
- **When and how you can effectively engage to shape priorities**

By demystifying the process, this Action Guide aims to equip you to follow the flow of federal funding from proposal to law — and to shape it strategically.

Imagine you want Congress to increase funding for overdose prevention grants at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). This guide shows you how that money typically moves from an idea to checks going out to grantees.

Terminology

These terms define distinct stages in how funding is planned, approved and spent.

The Budget: Refers to the President's financial plan for the government, outlining proposed spending, revenues and priorities for the fiscal year. It is a proposal and not law.

Appropriations: Appropriations are laws passed by Congress annually that provide the legal authority for federal agencies to spend money. They determine how much funding specific agencies, programs and departments receive each year and how they should spend it.

Authorizations: Authorizations are laws that permit the creation or continuation of programs and specify how they may operate. They may recommend funding levels but do not supply actual funds. Programs are authorized before they can be funded through appropriations.

Module 1 Overview of the Federal Budget

Creating the federal government's budget is a shared responsibility between the Executive and Legislative Branches, with each playing a distinct role in shaping, enacting and overseeing how federal dollars are spent.

The process is designed to reflect the nation's priorities and ensures transparency, accountability and public input into how federal dollars are best utilized.

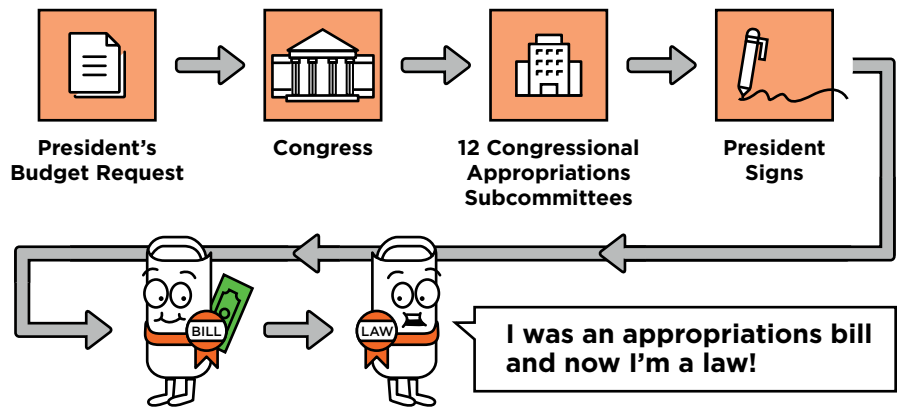
Constitutional and Legal Authority for the Budget Process

Understanding where each branch of government derives its authority clarifies their distinct responsibilities and limits within the budget and appropriations process.

In practice, the President proposes a budget, Congress decides how much can be spent and on what. Congress passes spending bills, the President signs or vetoes those bills. Federal agencies spend the funds, and the courts step in if there is a legal dispute.

Federal Budget Process:

EACH YEAR IN EARLY FEBRUARY



Appropriations vs. Authorization

WHAT DO I WANT TO DO?	WHAT IT DOES	WHO HANDLES IT	ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES
Am I asking Congress to change or create law? AUTHORIZATION	Establishes or changes federal programs and policies. Sets the rules for what a program can do and how it operates.	Authorizing Committees (e.g., Energy & Commerce, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP), Judiciary)	Advocate for new programs or reforms; provide evidence for why a policy should change.
Am I asking Congress to fund a program or agency? APPROPRIATIONS	Provides actual funding for authorized programs — how much money they get and how it's spent.	Appropriations Committees (in both House and Senate)	Advocate for sustained or increased funding; demonstrate program effectiveness and impact.

EXAMPLE: Community Health Centers

Authorization: Congress first authorized the Community Health Centers Program through the Public Health Service Act in 1975.

- This law created the program, defining who qualifies as a community health center, what services they must provide and how they serve medically underserved areas.
- The authorization sets a recommended funding level and gives the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) legal authority to administer it through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

Without this authorization, community health centers could not legally exist — it's the foundation that establishes the mission and purpose.

Appropriations: Each year, Congress must then appropriate dollars for the program.

- For example, in 2024 Congress appropriated \$1.8 billion for Community Health Centers.
- That appropriation makes it possible for HRSA to award specific grants to clinics for operations, staffing and patient care.

Major Players in the Federal Budget and Appropriations Process

Legislative Congress	Executive President & Cabinet	Executive Federal Agencies	Judicial Courts
			
A clause in the Constitution states that Congress alone can authorize federal spending. “Power of the purse” - Article I, Section 9 of the U.S. Constitution¹, grants Congress authority to levy taxes, borrow money and regulate federal spending. Additionally, it states “No Money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in Consequence of Appropriations made by Law.”²	While the President proposes the budget, Congress must approve actual spending through enacted appropriations. The Budget and Accounting Act of 1921³ requires the President to submit an annual, unified budget proposal to Congress. The President works through the <u>Office of Management and Budget (OMB)</u> — which oversees the performance of all federal agencies — to coordinate agency budget requests, shape fiscal policy and recommend funding priorities.	Federal agencies implement programs using the appropriations and authorizations enacted by Congress and signed by the President. Their spending is administered by the OMB under the <u>Antideficiency Act</u>⁴, which prohibits agencies from spending beyond what Congress allows. Agencies must also participate in congressional oversight hearings and meet reporting requirements so Congress can verify funds are used as intended.	Federal courts interpret the scope of budgetary powers and resolve disputes between the Legislative and the Executive Branches. This includes cases related to the <u>impoundment</u> of funds — or when an executive branch official, like the President, delays or withholds funding that Congress has appropriated.

The Executive Branch: Setting the Stage

The Executive Branch shapes the President's Budget Request. This request serves as both a policy statement and the starting point for congressional appropriations work.



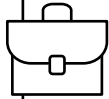
The President:

Sets the Administration's fiscal and policy priorities by submitting a proposed budget to Congress each year, typically on the first Monday in February. This proposal outlines funding requests for each agency and major policy initiatives.



The Office of Management and Budget (OMB):

OMB coordinates the preparation of the President's Budget across all federal agencies. It reviews agency requests, ensures consistency with the administration's goals and monitors spending throughout the year. OMB also issues guidance to the agencies on how to manage funds.



Federal Agencies and Departments:

Federal agencies prepare budget requests (called Congressional Budget Justifications) that reflect program needs for OMB review and they execute the budgets once funding is enacted.



If only Congress has the ability to provide funding, why is the President's Budget Proposal important for advocates?

It signals the Administration's priorities. The budget shows what the administration wants to expand, cut, or eliminate. Advocates can see where there's alignment—or where they'll need to push back.

The President's Budget also helps shape the conversation in Congressional Appropriations Committees.



INSIDER'S TIP

A bill's "score" refers to the cost estimate of the legislation. For example: Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that implementing the Public Health Infrastructure Modernization Act would cost \$2.4 billion over five years.

Members of Congress use the CBO score to assess affordability. Bills with higher costs are harder to advance unless paired with spending cuts or new revenue (often called 'offsets').

CBO scores matter to advocates because they shape whether an idea is seen as realistic, responsible, and politically viable in Congress.

You should use CBO cost estimates when requesting funding increases or new initiatives.

The Legislative Branch: Exercising the “Power of the Purse”

Within Congress, the Appropriations Committees in both the House and Senate drive this process through subcommittees.



Congress (House and Senate):

Congress reviews the President’s Budget, sets overall spending limits through the budget resolution, and passes appropriations and authorization bills. The House of Representatives typically initiates appropriations bills, while the Senate reviews, amends and must agree on the final version. Both chambers must pass identical bills before the President signs the bill into law.



House and Senate Appropriations Committees:

Each chamber has an Appropriations Committee responsible for drafting and reporting spending bills. They hold hearings, mark up bills and resolve differences through conference committees. Committee Chairs and Ranking Members hold substantial influence over funding and policy provisions. The Appropriations Committee is divided into 12 different subcommittees, each with a specific portfolio of agencies and programs.



The Congressional Budget Office (CBO):

A nonpartisan agency that provides independent analyses of budgetary and economic issues. It estimates the costs (“scores”) of proposed legislation and forecasts economic trends, helping lawmakers understand the fiscal impact of their decisions.

Who Does What?

Who are you working with	What they do on budget and appropriations	What you can ask them to do
President and Office of Management and Budget	Propose overall budget and agency levels	Include your program in the President’s Budget
Agencies	Request funds and run programs	Highlight impact, suggest budget lines
Appropriations Committees	Decide annual funding levels	Support your program; include it in bill or report language
Authorizing Committees	Create and shape programs	Reauthorize or strengthen program authority

A full list of subcommittees can be found in Appendix C.

**What's the difference between the Budget Committee and an Appropriations Committee?**

The difference comes down to planning vs. spending. The House and Senate Budget Committees are the planners. They draft the annual budget resolution which serves as the overall federal spending "blueprint."

The Appropriations Committees write the checks. Within the budget resolution framework, appropriators determine exactly how money will be spent.

Conference Committees: Bridging House and Senate Differences

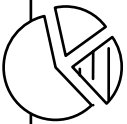
When the House and Senate pass different versions of an appropriations bill, both chambers must reconcile the differences. For differences that cannot be resolved informally, senior leaders will establish a conference committee of Members from both chambers. This conference committee negotiates and produces a final conference report with agreed-upon funding and explanatory language. Both chambers must approve the report before it goes to the President for signature.

**INSIDER'S TIP**

Stay engaged through the entire process. Many final funding decisions are made in conference and your support can influence what survives the negotiation.

Oversight and Accountability Bodies**Inspectors General (IGs):**

Each federal agency has an IG who audits and investigates to ensure funds are used as Congress intended.

**Government Accountability Office (GAO):**

An independent legislative agency that audits and evaluates federal programs. The GAO reviews if government-wide funds were used effectively and publishes findings that can highlight the need for future funding adjustments during the appropriations process.

**Why it Matters:**

GAO and IG reports can be powerful tools to demonstrate program effectiveness or identify areas requiring additional investment. Encourage members who champion your issues to request these reports.

Key Budget Documents

The Executive Branch's federal budget process relies on a series of core documents that guide each phase of planning, negotiation and enactment.



Agency Budget Justifications:

The administration's comprehensive proposal to Congress, detailing recommended spending, revenues and policy priorities for the next fiscal year. It includes detailed "budget justifications" from each agency explaining how funds would be used.

INSIDER'S TIP



Each budget justification is available on an agency's website after the release of the President's budget. Check the agency that most impacts your work to see detailed information on their budget request. For example, take a look at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)'s Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Justification to see how their priorities stack up:

<https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/fy-2026-aha-cj.pdf>

As a Senator, once floor debate time expires for a budget resolution or reconciliation bill, you can introduce an unlimited number of amendments to try and change the bill. This process leads to a marathon series of votes that often lasts for many hours and sometimes overnight. This process is referred to as a "vote-a-rama" and provides an opportunity for members of Congress to introduce amendments championing specific policy.

Appropriations Bills:

The 12 annual spending bills written by the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees. Each covers a specific set of federal activities (such as defense, transportation, or health and education) and provides the legal authority for spending.

Budget Reconciliation Acts:

Special legislation affecting spending, revenue or the debt limit. Reconciliation bills follow special procedures in the Senate — most importantly, they cannot be filibustered, so they can pass with a simple majority (51 votes) rather than the 60 votes normally needed to end debate. It provides a legislative tool to make large-scale changes to tax law, entitlement programs and other budgetary matters that might otherwise be stalled by partisan opposition.

CASE STUDY: BUDGET RECONCILIATION: THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA) OF 2021⁵

In 2021, the Senate used reconciliation to pass ARPA, a \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief package, to accelerate pandemic recovery and address its economic and public health effects. Because the Senate was evenly divided (50–50) in 2021, Democrats used reconciliation so that then-Vice President Kamala Harris could cast the tie-breaking vote, ensuring passage with 51 votes and without the need for bipartisan support.

Module 2 Types of Federal Spending

INSIDER'S TIP



For most public health programs, appropriations are where your advocacy matters most because they are part of the small flexible slice of the budget that Congress changes every year.

The federal government's spending falls into two broad categories: mandatory spending and discretionary spending. Understanding this distinction is fundamental to grasping how Congress shapes priorities and where the appropriations process fits.

Mandatory (Entitlement) Spending:

Mandatory spending, or entitlement spending, is funded by permanent laws and continues automatically each year without annual approval. It includes programs like Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, Unemployment Insurance and SNAP, which make up about two-thirds of federal spending. Because it isn't reviewed annually, it limits Congress's flexibility without changing benefits or revenues.

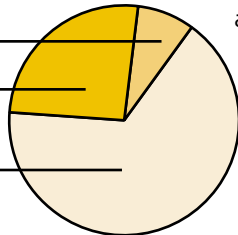
Composition of Federal Spending

FY 2022

Net Interest: 8%

Discretionary: 26%

Mandatory: 66%



Discretionary Spending:

Discretionary spending is set each year through the congressional appropriations process, funding areas like defense, education, housing, and health. It's the part of the federal budget most shaped by annual negotiations between Congress and the President. Although it makes up about one-third of the budget, it includes many of the most visible and debated programs because it changes with shifting national priorities.⁶

Defense vs. Non-Defense Discretionary Spending

Congress separates defense and non-defense spending, often setting distinct caps for each in the budget. These limits frequently become key points of negotiation, especially when balancing fiscal restraint and competing priorities. The term "spending parity" refers to a budgeting principle that there should be equal increases or cuts across defense and non-defense spending.⁶



Why it Matters:

Discretionary health funding - the dollars outside of Medicare and Medicaid - makes up about 1% of federal spending. Most health dollars go to mandatory programs like Medicare and Medicaid, while public health agencies such as CDC and NIH are primarily funded through discretionary spending.⁶

PART II: The Federal Appropriations Process

Module 3 Appropriations Overview

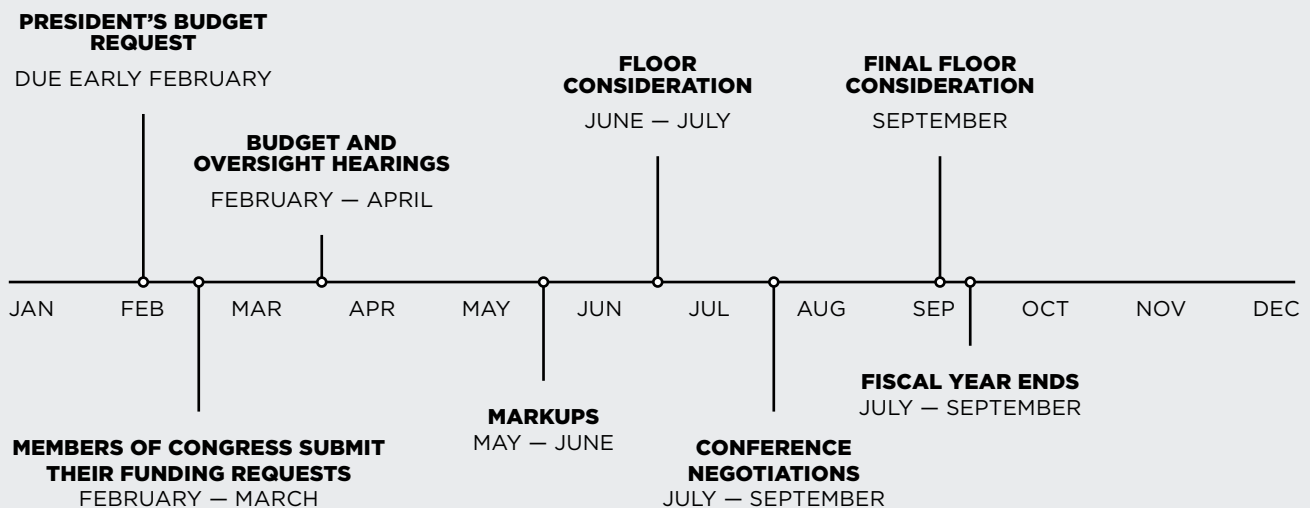
The federal appropriations cycle is how Congress decides, each fiscal year, how much discretionary funding to provide and how it should be spent. The process begins long before the start of the fiscal year and unfolds through a series of well-defined stages involving the Executive Branch (the President and federal agencies) and the Legislative Branch (Congress).

The Fiscal Year

The federal fiscal year (FY) runs from October 1 through September 30 of the following year.

When considering appropriations bills, Congress works ahead. That is, the funding bills debated and passed in a given calendar year apply to the next fiscal year. For example, the appropriations cycle that covers October 1, 2026, through September 30, 2027, will be labeled as FY2027.

Budget and Appropriations Timeline⁷



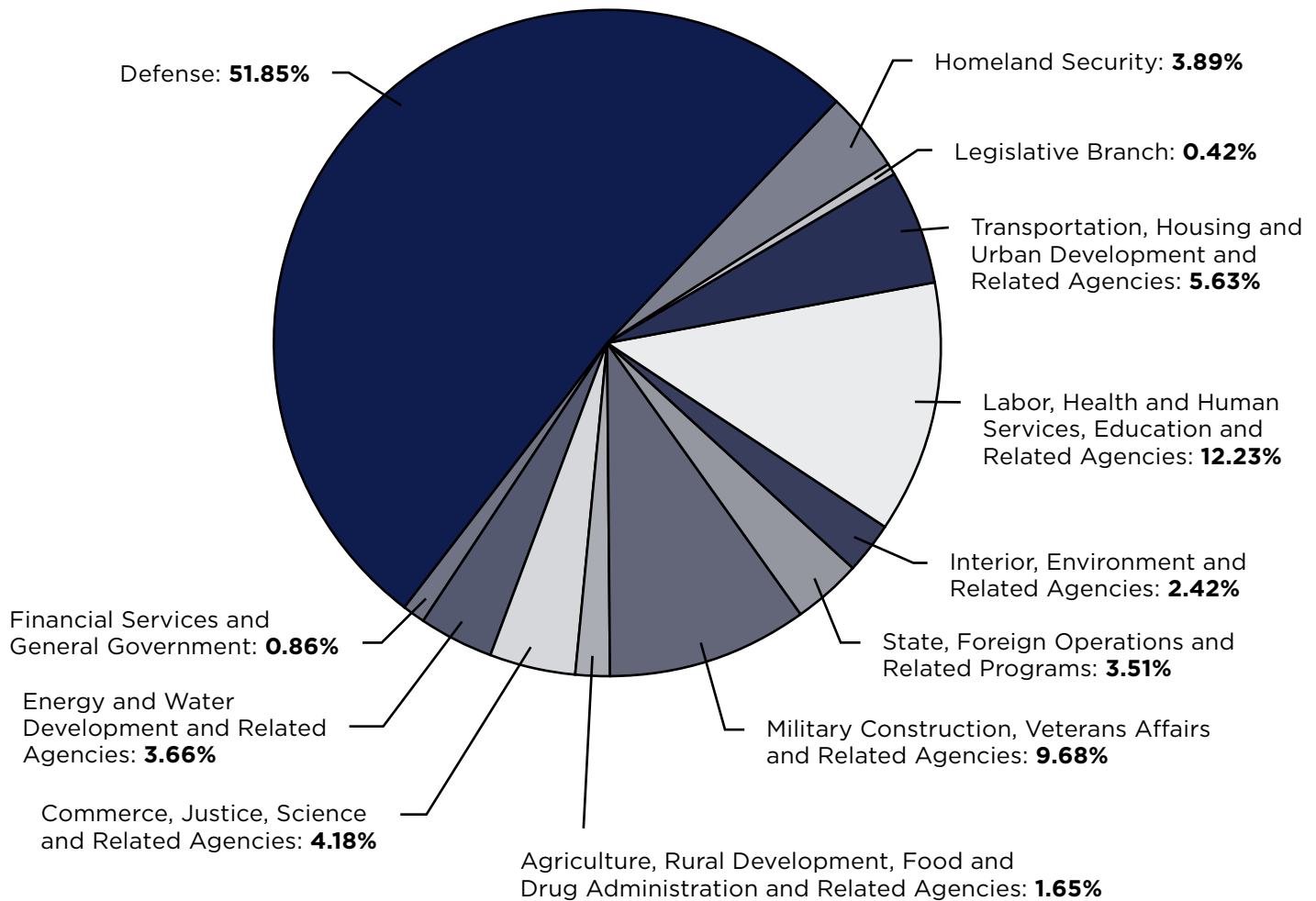
Phases of the Appropriations Process

The appropriations process generally unfolds in five major phases. Each phase has distinct players, documents and opportunities for engagement.

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Budget Formulation	Budget Resolution	Appropriations Subcommittee and Full Committee Action	Floor Consideration and Conference	Presidential Action and Implementation
FALL — WINTER	WINTER — SPRING	SPRING — SUMMER	SUMMER — FALL	FALL
TIMEFRAME: Typically begins one year before the fiscal year starts (e.g., agencies begin planning in fall 2024 for FY2026). Federal agencies develop detailed budget requests outlining their funding needs, program goals and justifications. These requests are reviewed by the OMB to ensure that agency proposals align with the President's policy priorities and fiscal targets. Once finalized, these requests are compiled into the President's Budget, the Administration's comprehensive spending proposal.	TIMEFRAME: After the President submits the budget (typically in February), Congress develops the budget resolution which sets the overall spending limits - 302(a). You can think of <u>302(a)</u> as the size of the whole pie. <u>302(b)</u> slices that pie into 12 pieces, one for each appropriations subcommittee.	TIMEFRAME: March through July Each chamber's Appropriations Committee then divides the total spending limit among its 12 subcommittees. These subcommittee-level limits are known as 302(b) allocations. Each subcommittee will then draft, mark up and report out a regular appropriations bill. After a subcommittee completes its draft bill and markup, the legislation moves to the full Appropriations Committee for review and possible amendment before it goes to the House or Senate floor.	TIMEFRAME: June through September After the committees finish reviewing and approving their bills, the full House and Senate each debate and vote on them. Members may propose amendments and both the House and Senate must pass identical versions before sending them to the President. If differences exist, a conference committee reconciles them into a single compromise bill. In recent years, Congress has often bundled several or all appropriations bills into a single omnibus or minibus package for efficiency.	TIMEFRAME: October 1 and beyond After Congress passes the appropriations bills, they are sent to the President for signature. Once signed, these funds can be implemented by the federal agencies in accordance with congressional intent and oversight. If appropriations are not complete by October 1, Congress often enacts a Continuing Resolution (CR) to maintain government operations temporarily, usually at existing funding levels. Occasionally, if agreement cannot be reached, a government shutdown may occur.

Fiscal Year 2024 Subcommittee Allocations⁷

This chart shows how FY24 discretionary funding was divided across the 12 appropriations subcommittees. The size of each slice matters because it reflects the funding limits each subcommittee works within when writing annual spending bills. For public health advocates, the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies allocation is especially important because it funds many of the federal programs that support prevention, treatment, recovery, public health infrastructure and related services. After a subcommittee completes its draft bill and markup, the legislation moves to the full Appropriations Committee for review and possible amendment before it goes to the House or Senate floor.



Module 4 The Anatomy of an Appropriations Bill

Each appropriations bill follows a structure designed to make federal spending transparent and legally enforceable. While the language may appear technical, understanding how these bills are organized will help you interpret where and how funds are being directed.

Bill Titles and Structure

Title I, II, III, etc.:

Broad thematic divisions within the bill, often corresponding to departments or major program areas.

EXAMPLE:

In the Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee's bill, Title I might cover Department of Labor programs, while Title II covers Health and Human Services.

Accounts:

Specific budget lines within each title that describe how much funding is provided to agencies, offices or activities.

EXAMPLE:

"Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — Immunization and Respiratory Diseases" is an account under HHS.

Sections:

Detailed legislative language, often including funding limitations, conditions or special instructions (called riders).

Key Parts of an Appropriations Bill

Every appropriations bill shares a common structure. Understanding each component helps advocates know where and how to influence funding decisions.

Title and Short Title:

Each bill begins with its short title (e.g., "The Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2026"), identifying which agencies and programs it funds.

Appropriations Language:

The bill includes specific funding amounts, usually stated as: "For expenses necessary to carry out [program], \$X,000,000, to remain available until [date]."

This language establishes the legal authority for agencies to obligate and spend funds. **These provisions can significantly influence agency action and should be closely monitored for impact.**

Limitations and Provisions:

Bills often include limitations, e.g. clauses that restrict how funds may be used. For example: “None of the funds provided under this heading may be used to implement [specific policy].”

General Provisions:

Toward the end of each bill, a section titled “General Provisions” includes policies that apply across multiple agencies funded by that bill. These may include reporting requirements, prohibitions or additional spending authorities.

Riders:

A rider is a legislative provision attached to an appropriations bill that sets policy rather than simply providing funding. While sometimes controversial, riders can shape federal programs by directing or prohibiting specific actions (for example, limiting the use of funds for a certain regulation or project).

EXAMPLE: Rider

The Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill contains a rider known as the ‘Dickey Amendment,’ which prohibits CDC injury-prevention funds from being used ‘to advocate or promote gun control.’ For years this language chilled firearms research, though 2018 guidance clarified that research itself is permitted.

That appropriations bill also contains a rider that restricts federal funds from being used to purchase sterile needles or syringes for distribution. Note: since 2016, Congress has allowed other components of syringe services programs in communities meeting certain public health criteria.

Appropriations Bill Accompanying Documents

Committee Report:

Committee reports explain funding decisions, priorities and congressional intent. They also include detailed tables showing increases or decreases from the prior year and specific guidance to agencies.

**Why it Matters:**

A committee’s report signals how Congress expects funds to be used, even if that direction isn’t written into law. For advocates, committee reports are not just explanatory documents—they are strategic tools for shaping implementation and accountability.

Module

5

Common Challenges and Special Situations

Challenges and special circumstances frequently arise that affect how and when federal funds are made available. Understanding these scenarios will help you stay informed and ready to respond when the process doesn't go as planned.

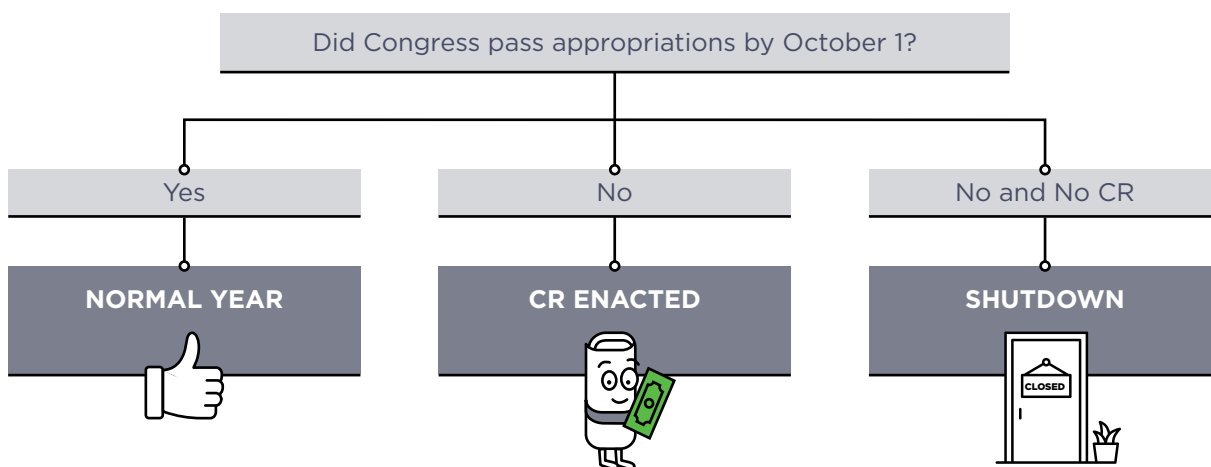
Continuing Resolutions (CRs) and Government Shutdowns

When Congress does not pass one or more appropriations bills before the October 1 start of the fiscal year, it often enacts a Continuing Resolution (CR) to keep the government operating temporarily. A CR extends prior-year funding levels, with limited adjustments (“anomalies”), until regular appropriations are enacted.

- Agencies such as CDC and HRSA must operate at prior-year levels, delaying the start of new grants or initiatives.
- State and local health departments face uncertainty in planning for workforce, surveillance or response activities.
- CRs often prohibit new program starts, even if Congress intends to fund them later.

If no CR or appropriations bill is enacted, the government experiences a shutdown, during which agencies halt operations. Essential services (like infectious disease monitoring or emergency response) may continue, but staff are furloughed or work without pay until funding resumes.

This underscores how vulnerable discretionary-funded agencies and programs are when appropriations are delayed. Agencies can face interruptions, delays in grants, hiring freezes or delayed implementation of new initiatives.

**INSIDER'S TIP**

A Continuing Resolution is like living on last year's budget until your new paycheck is sorted out. It keeps the lights on but freezes new plans.

Supplemental Appropriations (Emergency or Disaster Funding)

Supplemental appropriations are enacted outside the regular appropriations cycle to address unexpected emergencies, such as natural disasters, disease outbreaks or other crises.



INSIDER'S TIP

Supplemental bills can move very quickly. Advocates should be prepared to provide real-time data or impact stories to help justify funding. Regular appropriations are your annual salary. Supplemental appropriations are like an emergency bonus after a crisis.

Community Project Funding and Congressionally Directed Spending (formerly known as Earmarks)

Earmarks (now called Community Project Funding in the House and Congressionally Directed Spending in the Senate) allow Members to direct funding to specific local projects. Selected projects receive a direct federal award instead of competing through a merit-based grant process, reducing the time between request and disbursement.

What advocates need to know about earmarks:

Each Member of Congress may submit a limited number of requests annually, but securing funding for these projects can be tough. Vague ideas don't get traction—appropriators need concrete, fundable projects. Before reaching out to your member of Congress, you need to be prepared.

If you are looking for a Member of Congress to champion an earmark, know the specifics of the project you are proposing:

- What is the project's purpose and scope?
- What is the funding amount needed (no ballpark estimates, be precise)?
- Who would receive the funds? The recipient must be a not-for-profit or public organization
- What is the expected community impact?



EXAMPLE: Community Project Funding

In FY 2023, Taos Community Foundation's Taos LEAD (Let Everyone Advance with Dignity) received \$113,000 to support a diversion program that provides intensive case management for low-level, nonviolent crimes associated with substance use disorder (SUD).

Reading and Interpreting an Appropriations Bill

☐	Start with the table of contents to identify which titles relate to your area.
☐	Review the funding amounts in comparison to prior-year levels.
☐	Read accompanying committee reports to understand the rationale behind changes.
☐	Identify policy riders or limitations that may affect program operations.
☐	Monitor the explanatory statement after enactment to confirm final intent.

Module 6 Ecosystem of Influence

The federal appropriations process rarely follows a perfect timeline. Continuing resolutions, shutdowns, supplementals and other mid-year adjustments are part of the reality of managing government funds. For public health programs, these disruptions can mean delayed grants, uncertain staffing or missed opportunities to respond to emerging needs.

Understanding these special situations is not just about navigating uncertainty—it's about anticipating where influence and flexibility matter most. Whether monitoring continuing resolutions, contributing data to justify emergency supplementals or ensuring transparency in community project funding, informed engagement can help sustain critical public health programs even in unpredictable budget environments.

The appropriations process involves a network of key players outside of the appropriations committees that influence how priorities are set, how funds are managed and how accountability is maintained. Understanding who does what, and when, is as important as knowing the process itself.

Authorizing Committees: Defining Policy Frameworks

While Appropriations Committees determine how much money programs receive each year, Authorizing Committees define what programs exist and how they can operate.

- These committees establish the legal authority for federal programs, often through multi-year authorization bills.
- They set a program's purpose, structure and spending parameters.

In public health, the [House Energy and Commerce Committee](https://energycommerce.house.gov/) (<https://energycommerce.house.gov/>) and the [Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions \(HELP\) Committee](https://www.help.senate.gov/) (<https://www.help.senate.gov/>) are especially influential to this process.

Inside the Agencies: Budget and Congressional Affairs Offices

Every department and agency maintains both a Budget Office and a Congressional Affairs (or Legislative Affairs) Office to manage the relationship between internal program operations and Congress.

- **Budget Offices** coordinate internal financial planning, track obligations and prepare annual justifications for congressional review.
- **Congressional Affairs Offices** facilitate communication with appropriations and authorizing committees, helping respond to requests, organize hearings and ensure compliance with legislative directives.

In public health, the HHS Assistant Secretary for Financial Resources (ASFR) oversees budget coordination across agencies like CDC, NIH and HRSA, while maintaining contact with the Appropriations Committees. During hearings, ASFR staff help ensure consistent messaging on how funds are used and what additional resources are needed.

The Human Element: Staff and Their Influence

While Members of Congress make the final decisions, committee and personal staff shape much of the day-to-day work that determines funding outcomes.

- **Appropriations Staff** review agency justifications, draft language and negotiate line-item changes between chambers.
- **Authorizing Staff** develop legislative proposals, oversee reauthorization cycles and collaborate with agencies on policy implementation.
- **Personal Office Staff** (e.g., Legislative Directors and Legislative Assistants) serve as direct points of contact for constituents, advocates and experts.



INSIDER'S TIP

Check the [House](https://clerk.house.gov/) (<https://clerk.house.gov/>) and [Senate Clerk's Office](#) for the most up-to-date information on your member's staff. When in doubt, call the office directly and ask who works on your issue.

External Stakeholders: The Broader Influence Network

A wide array of outside stakeholders help shape the policy environment and provide expertise that informs congressional decision-making.

Advocacy and Nonprofit Organizations	Professional and Trade Associations	Lobbyists and Policy Consultants
Amplify program success stories and community impact. Provide technical support and subject matter expertise. Submit written testimony, letters of support or statements for the record. Build coalitions to demonstrate widespread stakeholder alignment.	Supply technical expertise, data and policy recommendations. Engage directly with committee staff and agency officials to address implementation challenges.	Offer strategic guidance on timing, messaging and relationship management. Often coordinate between national associations, local stakeholders and Members' offices to align requests and avoid duplication.

EXAMPLE:

During the COVID-19 pandemic, coordinated advocacy from public health associations — including the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, the National Association of County and City Health Officials, and the American Public Health Association — helped shape emergency supplemental funding and long-term investments in workforce and data modernization.

Advocates and Lobbyists: What's the Difference?

All lobbying is advocacy, but not all advocacy is lobbying. Advocacy means supporting a cause or issue in a broad way, while lobbying is a specific type of advocacy focused on influencing lawmakers about a certain bill or law, including specific appropriations.

Educational outreach may not constitute lobbying in some circumstances, but rules depend on the speaker, organization, funding source and specific request. Confirm internal legal guidance before submitting specific asks.

For more information, reference the accompanying [GHAI U.S. Federal Advocacy Guide](#).

PART III: Navigating the Process as a Stakeholder

Module

7

How to Engage Effectively

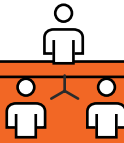
Turning Knowledge into Impact

Understanding how federal funding works is just the start. Real change happens when that knowledge is used to act, connect and advocate with purpose. Every stage of the budget and appropriations process offers a chance to shape priorities, inform decisions and ensure communities have the resources needed to thrive.

By engaging strategically and sharing the stories behind the numbers, you can turn insight into influence and keep public health and other essential priorities at the heart of federal investment.

Principles of Effective Federal Advocacy

Successful advocacy in the appropriations process rests on three pillars:

Timing 	Relationships 	Credibility 
Budget requests are shaped months before they are public, early engagement (during the fall and winter timeframe) is critical. Tailor advocacy messages to key milestones: Budget Release, Hearings, Markup, Conference, and Negotiations	Building ongoing, respectful relationships with Congressional staff and agency officials (not one-time asks) leads to credibility and access. Relationships matter across both branches, make sure to consider both the agencies and congressional committees in your outreach.	Use evidence-based arguments: data, success metrics, community impact and accountability that policymakers can trust. Avoid partisan framing; present solutions that align with shared public-health and community goals.

Process Timeline



Strategic Engagement Tactics

Effective advocacy requires sustained, strategic engagement throughout the entire appropriations cycle.

☐	Build Relationships Early • Identify which Appropriations Subcommittee funds your issue area and meet with members in the House and Senate who serve as part of relevant Subcommittee(s). • Meet with both majority and minority staff; staff turnover is frequent, so maintain updated contacts.
☐	Provide Clear, Localized Impact Data • Quantify your request if possible: “\$5 million would fund X programs serving Y people.” • Highlight the district or state-level impact—members prioritize tangible local benefits. • Include real stories of community success or unmet need.
☐	Align With Administration and Congressional Priorities • Frame your issue within broader policy goals (e.g., economic development, public health, innovation). • Use language drawn from agency strategic plans or the President’s budget for consistency. • Increase appeal and sustainability with bipartisan framing.
☐	Leverage Coalitions and Partnerships • Coordinate with associations, national coalitions and local partners to submit joint letters or host briefings. • Amplify visibility and legitimacy and show consensus with unified requests.
☐	Engage Members Beyond Appropriations • Utilize “Dear Colleague” letters or caucus engagement to help Non-Appropriations Members influence their colleagues. • Complete your Member’s Programmatic and Report Language request forms. • Encourage your Member to advocate for your priority to the relevant subcommittee. • Raise awareness and build champions with district-level events, site visits and roundtables.

**Submit Testimony and Funding Requests**

- Respond to subcommittee call for written testimony (typically in early spring).
- Keep submissions concise: 2-3 pages with a clear request, justification and local relevance.
- Follow your individual Member's online application process and deadlines closely for Community Project Funding (CPF) and Congressionally Directed Spending requests – these are not centralized.

**Track and Respond to Key Documents**

- Monitor release of:
 - President's Budget — **FEBRUARY**
 - House and Senate Budget Resolutions — **SPRING**
 - 302(b) allocations — **SPRING/SUMMER**
 - Subcommittee markups and reports — **SUMMER**
- Adjust advocacy messages as numbers shift through these stages.

**Follow Up After Enactment**

- Thank Members and staff who supported your request.
- Share how funds are being used or the difference they've made. This may include engagements such as inviting the Member of Congress for a site visit, if appropriate, to see the result of their appropriation.

**Maintain a Year-Round Advocacy Presence**

- Gather data showing how federal funds were used and their impact to build evidence for future requests.
- Monitor agency implementation, GAO reports or Inspector General findings to identify emerging issues or new opportunities.
- Begin outreach in late summer to agency budget and congressional-affairs offices to influence the next year's agency budget proposals.

Module 8 Putting Outreach into Action

Successful federal outreach blends timing, precision and persistence. Knowing how to identify the right contacts, make a targeted ask and follow up effectively can significantly increase the visibility of your priorities.

Identify Key Appropriations Committee Members

Members who serve on the House and Senate Appropriations Committees and particularly on relevant subcommittees, hold significant influence over funding decisions.

Steps:

1. Review current committee rosters on the Appropriations Committee websites:
 - [House Appropriations Committee \(https://appropriations.house.gov/\)](https://appropriations.house.gov/)
 - [Senate Appropriations Committee \(https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/\)](https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/)
2. Identify Members of the key appropriations subcommittees. For example, the Labor, Health and Human Services (LHHS) subcommittee has jurisdiction over most HHS agencies like CDC, SAMHSA, NIH, etc. The Agriculture subcommittee funds the FDA. The subcommittee for Interior and Environment oversees funding to the Indian Health Service. See Appendix C for the full list of subcommittees.
3. Learn who serves as Chair and Ranking Member and note your own Members' relationships with them (e.g., same state, caucus or committee overlap).
4. Track their hearing statements, press releases and funding priorities to tailor your outreach accordingly.

EXAMPLE:

A community health organization in Iowa might note which Iowa Senators serve on key committees (such as Appropriations or HELP) and approach them about rural health funding.

Find Program Names, Agencies and Federal Accounts

To make an effective budget request (or “appropriations ask”), you need the correct account name, agency and appropriations subcommittee that funds your program. This ensures your request reaches the right place.

Start with the President's Budget (White House OMB):

- Visit <https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/> and explore the Appendix of the most recent President's Budget.
- Each agency's section lists accounts, program names and funding levels for the upcoming fiscal year.
- Example: Under "Department of Health and Human Services," you'll find entries for "CDC: Immunization and Respiratory Diseases," "Public Health Workforce," etc.

Check Congressional Appropriations Bills and Reports:

- Remember, the appropriations committee uses last year's bill and report as their starting point for the new fiscal year.
- Go to the House Appropriations Committee or Senate Appropriations Committee websites.
- Review the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education (LHHS) bill text and accompanying committee report.
- These reports list program-level funding, sometimes including specific justifications or directives.

Use Agency Budget Justifications:

- Federal agencies post detailed breakdowns of their programs in their annual budget justifications.

EXAMPLE:

The CDC FY2025 Congressional Budget Justification shows every line-item, account and sub-activity.

- You can usually find these by searching online for "[Agency name] Congressional Budget Justification FY202X" (e.g., "NIH Congressional Budget Justification FY2026").

Consult Non-government Resources:

- Nonprofits and professional societies such as the Coalition for Health Funding, Trust for America's Health or the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) often publish summaries linking public health programs to their appropriations accounts.
- The Federal Funds Information for States (FFIS) database details the flow of federal funds to state and local governments.

Ask Congressional Staff:

- When in doubt, congressional staff can confirm the account name and appropriations subcommittee jurisdiction.
- This is common and shows you're being diligent about accuracy.

Formulate an Appropriations Ask

A strong appropriations ask is clear, specific and evidence-based. It should connect funding levels to tangible outcomes and align with congressional and agency priorities.

Key Elements:

- **Program Name and Agency:** Clearly state the federal account (e.g., CDC Public Health Workforce and Data Modernization Initiative).
- **Requested Funding Level:** If possible, specify an exact dollar amount and fiscal year (e.g., “We urge Congress to provide \$250 million in FY2026”). However, it is possible to request a general funding increase if necessary. Limit your ask to one or two funding priorities.
- **Justification:** Explain why this level is needed (e.g., include reference data, outcomes and impact).
- **Local or National Impact:** Illustrate how the program benefits your community or constituency.
- **Partners or Coalition Support:** Mention alignment with other groups or national recommendations.

EXAMPLE ASK:

We urge the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies to provide \$250 million for the CDC Public Health Workforce Initiative in FY 2026. This funding will strengthen state and local public health capacity and address critical workforce gaps.

Draft Bill and Report Language

You can strengthen your request by proposing bill or report language. This is short text that Congress includes in an appropriations bill or its accompanying report.

- **Bill Language:** Sets legal funding levels or requirements. It is binding and typically concise.

EXAMPLE:

“For an additional amount for the CDC Public Health Workforce Program, \$100,000,000, to remain available until September 30, 2027.”

- **Report Language:** Expresses congressional intent or directs agency action. It is not legally binding but highly influential. Example: “The Committee supports continued investment in the Public Health Workforce Program and encourages CDC to prioritize partnerships with state and local health departments.”

INSIDER'S TIP



When you are drafting a suggested bill or report language, start with the strongest verbs (red/orange range) and let the member offices water down if necessary.

Choosing the Right Words: Strength of Verbs in Bill and Report Language

	Strength Level	Verb/Phrase	Type	Typical Use or Effect	Example
STRONGEST ↑ ↓ WEAKEST	Binding	"Shall" "Must"	Bill language	Creates a legal requirement; agencies are obligated to act.	"The Secretary shall allocate not less than \$10,000,000 for state laboratory capacity."
	Directive	"Is directed to" "Is required to"	Report or bill language	Instructs specific action; very strong for report language.	"The CDC is directed to expand coordination with state health departments."
	Expectation Priority	"Should" "Is expected to" "Is urged to"	Report language	Signals clear committee expectations; agencies generally comply but not mandatory.	"The Committee expects the Department to continue funding opioid surveillance programs."
	Encouragement Support	"Encourages" "Supports" "Recommends" "Notes"	Report language	Expresses preference or support; commonly used by committees for advisory intent.	"The Committee encourages CDC to strengthen partnerships with local public health agencies."
	Acknowledgment	"Recognizes" "Commends" "Acknowledges"	Report language	Symbolic acknowledgment or affirmation; lowest directive weight.	"The Committee recognizes the importance of vaccination outreach efforts."

Important: Only BILL language is legally binding. 'Shall' and 'must' in report language carry strong weight but are not statutory requirements.

EXAMPLE ASK:

Report language is a useful way for Congress to signal that it is watching how an Administration handles a specific issue. For example, the Senate Appropriations Committee report for FY 26 urged FDA to use all legally available tools to remove unlawful tobacco products from the market. That language does more than encourage action, it also puts the Administration on notice that Congress expects follow-through.

Tips for Drafting:

☐	Keep language brief, factual and in neutral tone.
☐	Use committee-style language (“the Committee encourages,” “the Committee recognizes”).
☐	Cite specific programs or accounts.
☐	Coordinate with staff early—Members’ offices often appreciate draft language they can refine.

Types of Appropriations Asks

Type of Appropriations Ask	Purpose	Key Elements & Examples
Programmatic Funding Request	Requests funding for a national program or account at a specified level.	Key Elements: Program/account name; specific dollar amount; justification; impact; partners. EXAMPLE: “Provide \$250 million for CDC’s Public Health Workforce Initiative in FY 2027.”
Community Project Funding (CPF) / Congressionally-Directed Spending (CDS) Request	Asks a Member of Congress to submit a district- or state-level project for funding.	Key Elements: Clear community benefit; project budget; eligibility documentation; alignment with Member priorities. EXAMPLE: “Provide \$1.5 million to expand the Springfield Community Health Clinic.”
Bill Language Request	Requests binding statutory text in the appropriations bill directing or requiring agency action.	Key Elements: Short, precise statutory wording; clear action required. EXAMPLE: “The Secretary shall establish a rural health recruitment demonstration program.”
Report Language Request	Requests nonbinding but influential guidance included in committee reports to shape agency actions or priorities.	Key Elements: Directive or encouraging language; justification; expected outcome. EXAMPLE: “The Committee encourages CDC to study barriers to rural health workforce recruitment.”

Draft Testimony

Written testimony allows you to formally communicate with appropriations subcommittees, even without testifying in person and it will be included in the committee hearing record.

You can find testimony posted online by many subcommittees—review prior submissions for examples of format and tone.

☐	Check the subcommittee’s website for instructions and deadlines for written testimony submissions.
☐	Follow format requirements, usually a 2-3 page PDF with name, title, organization and funding request.
☐	Maintain a Year-Round Advocacy Presence • Brief background of your organization. • The specific program and funding request. • A concise explanation of the program’s value and outcomes. • Data, community stories or examples of impact. • Contact information.
☐	Address the testimony to the subcommittee chair and ranking member (e.g., “The Honorable Tammy Baldwin, Chair and The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito, Ranking Member…”).

EXAMPLE TESTIMONY:

“Chairman [Name] and Ranking Member [Name], thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of [Organization Name]. We respectfully urge the Subcommittee to provide \$X million for the CDC Overdose Data to Action program in FY 2027, an increase of \$Y million over the FY 2026 enacted level.”

“This program provides the surveillance backbone that allows state and local health departments to detect fatal and non-fatal overdoses in near-real time. In 2024, our coalition used OD2A data to expand naloxone distribution in three rural counties and reduced fatal overdoses by 18% in the following twelve months. Continued investment is essential to sustaining this progress.”

“We would welcome the opportunity to provide additional data or arrange a program site visit at your convenience. [Name, Title, Organization, Email, Phone].”

Submit an Appropriations Form Request

Most Members of Congress use an online portal or PDF form to collect constituent requests for programmatic requests, Community Project Funding or language inclusion.

Steps:

1. Visit your Representative's or Senator's official website in early February to find their appropriations request form (often listed under "Appropriations Requests" or "Community Project Funding").
2. Complete the form with:
 - Contact and organization information.
 - The program, agency and account name.
 - Your specific funding request and justification.
 - Optional: Suggested bill or report language.
3. Double-check deadlines: They differ by each Congressional office. When in doubt, call or email the office to confirm.
4. Submit before the Member's internal review period ends (usually early March).

INSIDER'S TIP



Submitting through your Member's office is one of the most direct ways to elevate your funding priority to the subcommittee level.

Draft a Letter to Leadership

There are two common letter types: letters from advocates to Congress and 'Dear Colleague' letters Members send to appropriators. Sign-on letters can be high-impact advocacy tools that function as collective petitions to key decision-makers. Drafting a letter of support for a funding priority can demonstrate a unified front across multiple organizations to influence policy outcomes. Make sure to monitor advocacy networks for open sign-on opportunities.

Similarly, a "Dear Colleague" letter is a short letter that Members of Congress circulate to their peers (usually to the Appropriations Committee or specific subcommittees) to show bipartisan or broad support for a funding request or policy issue. Advocates often help educate congressional offices about a program's importance and provide background material that can inform these letters. When these letters have signatures of many Members it emphasizes the broad nature of support for an issue to the committee members and staff making funding decisions. Make sure to encourage your coalition partners to ask their own Members to sign on to "Dear Colleague" letters.

Purpose:

- Amplifies an issue's visibility within Congress.
- Signals to appropriators that the request has multiple supporters.
- Serves as an organizing tool for coalition advocacy.

Key Components:

- **Header and Subject Line:** Clearly identify the program or issue (e.g., "Support for the CDC Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program").
- **Opening Paragraph:** Briefly describe the program and its national/local significance.
- **Funding Request:** State the exact amount and account name (e.g., "We urge the Subcommittee to provide \$870 million for CDC's Public Health Emergency Preparedness grants under the CDC-Wide Activities and Program Support account").
- **Rationale:** Explain why the funding is needed—include data, success stories or local relevance.
- **Closing Paragraph:** Encourage colleagues to join as signatories and thank them for their consideration.
- **Contact Information:** Include the staff contact for Members' offices to sign on.

To strengthen a "Dear Colleague" letter, focus on bipartisan participation and offer to identify local or regional impacts that may appeal to Members across party lines.

EXAMPLE DEAR COLLEAGUE LETTER:

"Subject: Support Robust Funding for CDC Overdose Prevention Programs — Please Sign On by [Date]"

"Dear Colleague,"

"Drug overdose remains one of the leading causes of death among working-age adults in the United States. CDC's Overdose Data to Action (OD2A) program is the primary federal mechanism for surveillance, prevention planning and local response. Its funding reaches every state and the District of Columbia."

"We invite you to join us in sending a letter to the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee requesting \$[X] million for OD2A in FY [Year] — an increase that reflects sustained need and documented results. In our districts alone, OD2A-supported programs have expanded naloxone access, strengthened data sharing and reduced fatal overdoses."

"To add your name, please contact [Staff Name] in our office at [email] by [date].
Thank you for considering our request."

"Sincerely, [Member Name], [Member Name]"

Ranking the Impact of Advocacy Tools

Relative Impact on Funding Outcomes	Type of Action	Description	Typical Participants	Notes for Advocates
★★★★★	Request from Appropriations Committee Member (Chair, Ranking Member or Subcommittee Member)	Direct request to include or adjust funding in the bill or report language.	House or Senate Appropriator	These Members write the bills; their support often determines inclusion. Prioritize outreach to subcommittee members funding your program.
★★★★	Bipartisan, Multi-Member Sign-On Letter to Appropriations Leadership/Subcommittee Chairs	Coordinated letter signed by several Members urging specific funding or language.	Multiple Members from both parties	Demonstrates broad support and raises visibility. Bipartisan letters are most effective.
★★★	Single-Member Funding Request (Non-Appropriator)	Individual letter or form submission to the Appropriations Committee.	Any Member of Congress	Can be influential if the Member has relevant district or policy connections. Strong justification and local impact strengthen the request.
★★	Testimony Submission or Written Statement for the Record	Formal testimony submitted to an Appropriations Subcommittee.	Any organization or constituent	Provides valuable input for staff background but may not directly shift funding without Member engagement.
★	Public Advocacy (Press releases, coalition letters, social media, district meetings)	Broader advocacy activities to raise awareness and public support.	Advocates, coalitions, organizations	Indirect influence—helps build momentum, visibility and constituent pressure that supports congressional action.

★★★★★ = direct, highest-leverage influence on funding decisions

★ = indirect influence that supports campaign visibility.

PART IV: Appendices

Stay Informed and Stay Connected

Official government resources, nonpartisan analysis outlets and advocacy tools can help you monitor funding decisions and engage strategically throughout the fiscal year.

Appendix A: Official Federal Resources

Resource	What It Provides	How to Use It
Office of Management and Budget (OMB) https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/	President's Budget (annual). OMB Circular A-11 (budget rules). Government-wide policy memos.	Review each February to understand Administration priorities and baseline funding proposals.
Congressional Budget Office (CBO) https://www.cbo.gov/	Nonpartisan cost estimates ("scores"). Economic and budget outlooks. Analyses of spending and revenue trends.	Use CBO data to strengthen fiscal credibility in proposals and understand cost implications.
Government Accountability Office (GAO) https://www.gao.gov/	Audits and oversight reports. Program performance evaluations. Management and spending recommendations.	Cite GAO reports to show program challenges, inefficiencies or successes supporting your funding case.
Congressional Research Service (CRS) https://www.congress.gov/crs-products	In-depth research and policy analysis. Explanations of budget process, appropriations history and programs.	Use CRS reports to clarify key concepts (e.g., 302(b)s, CRs) and to understand current issues.
House & Senate Appropriations Committees https://appropriations.house.gov/ https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/	Subcommittee jurisdictions & schedules. Bill texts, summaries and report language. Testimony & CPF deadlines.	Track hearings/markups to time advocacy and submit testimony or requests.

Appendix A: Official Federal Resources (contd.)

Resource	What It Provides	How to Use It
House & Senate Budget Committees https://budget.house.gov/ https://www.budget.senate.gov/	Budget resolutions setting spending limits. Analyses of national fiscal priorities.	Review resolutions to understand the overall spending framework driving appropriations.
Government Publishing Office (GPO) https://www.govinfo.gov/	Official appropriations laws. Committee reports & Federal Register. Legislative history archives.	Access authoritative historical and current appropriations documents.
Congress.gov https://www.congress.gov/	Bill texts, amendments, actions. Real-time legislative tracking. Custom email alerts.	Monitor progress of appropriations bills and set alerts for relevant topics.
Federal Register https://www.federalregister.gov/	Daily federal notices. Grant announcements. Regulatory updates.	Track when agencies implement funding and open grant competitions.
USAspending.gov https://www.usaspending.gov/	Federal spending data by agency/program. Recipient-level information. Maps and interactive dashboards.	Explore how funds flow to states, communities and specific recipients.

Appendix B: Community Project Funding / Congressionally-Directed Spending (Earmark) Resources

Resource	What It Provides	How to Use It
House Appropriations Committee - CPF Guidance https://appropriations.house.gov/community-project-funding	Annual guidance outlining CPF rules, deadlines, required documentation and transparency standards. Eligible accounts and restrictions for House requests.	Review as soon as posted (usually February–March). Use guidance to structure your application and verify program eligibility.
Senate Appropriations Committee - CDS Guidelines	Annual Senate-specific requirements, eligible accounts and documentation rules. Information on transparency, certification and reporting expectations.	Check each spring for updates. Align your proposal with Senate rules, which may differ from House requirements. Senate CDS rules are set annually by each chamber's leadership and may vary year to year.
Individual Member Websites (House & Senate)	Online CPF request forms for constituents. District/state-specific priorities, deadlines and eligibility criteria. Instructions on required attachments (budgets, letters, project descriptions).	Bookmark your Member's page early in the year. Monitor closely for when CPF/CDS portals open. Submit tailored requests that reflect district-level benefits. Set calendar reminders for March, when most House CPF portals open.

Appendix C: Appropriations Subcommittees

Subcommittee	Examples of Covered Agencies
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies	U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Food and Drug Administration
Commerce, Justice, Science	Department of Justice, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Defense	Department of Defense, Military Operations
Energy and Water Development	Department of Energy, Army Corps of Engineers
Financial Services and General Government	Treasury, Small Business Administration
Homeland Security	Federal Emergency Management Agency, Transportation Security Administration, U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Interior, Environment	Environmental Protection Agency, National Park Service
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education	Health and Human Services (National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, etc.), Department of Education
Legislative Branch	Congressional agencies and staff
Military Construction, Veterans Affairs	Veterans Affairs
State, Foreign Operations	State Department, United States Agency for International Development
Transportation, Housing and Urban Development	Department of Transportation, Housing and Urban Development

Conclusion

By completing this guide, you have built a working understanding of how federal funding decisions are made and where advocates can shape the process. You have learned how the budget and appropriations cycle work, how to identify the programs, agencies, committees and staff connected to your issue and how to develop a clear funding request supported by evidence, local impact and community need. You now have tools to draft testimony, prepare outreach, engage partners, monitor key decision points and follow up after funding decisions are made.

Use this guide as a practical reference throughout the year as political conditions shift, deadlines approach or your advocacy strategy needs to evolve. Effective appropriations advocacy depends on preparation, persistence and credible engagement. With these tools, you are better positioned to protect public health investments, strengthen partnerships and help move policy priorities from ideas into impact.

Additional advocacy resources are available through the Global Health Advocacy Incubator's Health Advocacy Training and Collaboration Hub (HATCH), a free online platform that helps public health advocates and leaders learn, collaborate and lead policy-driven campaigns.

Visit <https://hatchadvocacy.org> to access the U.S. Federal Advocacy Action Guide and other resources to support your next steps.

For more information contact help@hatchadvocacy.org.

¹ <https://constitution.congress.gov/browse/article-1/section-9/>

² https://constitution.congress.gov/browse/essay/artI-S9-C7-1/ALDE_00001095/

³ <https://www.gao.gov/assets/D03855.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.gao.gov/legal/appropriations-law/resources>

⁵ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/1319>

⁶ <https://democrats-budget.house.gov/publications/ndd-what-it-and-why-it-risk>

⁷ <https://appropriations.house.gov/about/appropriations-committee-authority-process-and-impact>

Glossary of Budget and Appropriations Terms

302(a) allocations:

The total amount of discretionary spending the Budget Resolution authorizes for the Appropriations Committees. Think of it as the full size of the discretionary budget 'pie.'

302(b) allocations:

The subcommittee-level division of the 302(a) total. Each of the 12 Appropriations Subcommittees receives a 302(b) allocation that caps the amount it can spend in its bill.

Antideficiency Act:

A federal law (originally enacted in 1870, strengthened over time) that prohibits federal agencies from spending or obligating money before Congress appropriates it or beyond the amount appropriated. Violations must be reported to the President and Congress.

Authorizations:

A law passed by Congress that creates or continues a federal program, defines its scope and rules and sets a recommended funding level. Authorization alone does not provide money — funding requires a separate appropriations act.

Conference Committee:

A temporary committee of House and Senate Members appointed to reconcile differences between the two chambers' versions of a bill.

Congressional Budget Justifications:

The detailed document federal agencies submit to Congress each year explaining how it plans to use requested funds. CJs are published with the President's Budget and are a primary reference for congressional staff during appropriations review.

Continuing Resolution (CR):

A short-term appropriations law that keeps the government running when regular appropriations are not enacted by October 1. CRs typically extend prior-year funding levels and restrict new starts.

Earmark / Community Project Funding (CPF) / Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS):

Funding for a specific project or recipient directed by a Member of Congress through the appropriations process. 'CPF' is the House term; 'CDS' is the Senate term. Transparency rules require public posting of each request.

Fiscal Framework:

The overall set of spending levels, revenue assumptions and deficit projections that Congress adopts — typically expressed through the annual budget resolution and its 302(a) allocations.

Impoundment:

The refusal of the executive branch to spend funds Congress has appropriated. Under the Impoundment Control Act of 1974, the President cannot unilaterally impound funds; any proposed cancellation must be formally submitted to Congress.

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021:

A \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief and economic stimulus law enacted in March 2021 using the budget reconciliation process. Passed on a 50-50 Senate vote broken by the Vice President.

Defense (discretionary):

Discretionary spending for national defense, including the Department of Defense, some Department of Energy nuclear programs and national security-related functions.

Glossary of Budget and Appropriations Terms

Non-Defense (discretionary):

All discretionary spending that is not classified as defense — including public health, education, housing, transportation, veterans' services, science and environmental protection. This is the category that funds most federal grants to states and localities.

Markup:

The working session in which a subcommittee or committee debates, amends and votes on a bill before reporting it to the full chamber.

Office of Management and Budget (OMB):

The largest office within the Executive Office of the President. OMB develops the President's Budget Request, coordinates agency budget requests, issues spending guidance and monitors agency execution of appropriated funds.

Reconciliation:

A special legislative process that allows budget-related legislation to pass the Senate with a simple majority (51 votes) rather than the 60 normally needed to end debate.

Reprogramming:

The movement of appropriated funds within a single account, usually requiring notification to the Appropriations Committees.

Rescission:

A formal cancellation of previously appropriated but unspent funds, proposed by the President and approved by Congress.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA):

The agency within HHS that leads public health efforts to advance behavioral health, administers federal grants for mental health and substance use disorder services and oversees the Overdose Prevention grant portfolio.

Supplemental Appropriations:

An appropriations act passed outside the regular cycle to respond to emergencies such as natural disasters, disease outbreaks or armed conflict.

Transfer:

The movement of appropriated funds between different accounts or agencies; generally requires statutory authority.

Vote-a-rama:

An extended series of amendment votes in the Senate — most common at the end of debate on a budget resolution or reconciliation bill — when any Senator can offer amendments and force votes. Often lasts many hours, sometimes overnight.

