



COALITION ON HUMAN NEEDS

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Senate Approves First Spending Bill, House Budget Would Cut SNAP, House Pentagon Spending Move Angers Advocates

On May 12, the Senate passed the **FY17 Energy-Water appropriations bill**, the first spending measure to be passed by either chamber for the upcoming fiscal year. A contentious amendment held up the bill for weeks, but after the amendment was voted down on May 11, the bill was allowed to move forward on its own. With the Energy-Water bill cleared, the Senate is expected to take up two appropriations bills simultaneously this week, the Transportation–Housing and Urban Development bill and the Military Construction–Veterans Affairs bill. Senate leadership hopes taking the two bills up together will allow for faster passage.

The Senate THUD bill includes \$39.2 billion for HUD, an increase of \$891 million over FY16. There are no major cuts, and funding is sufficient to renew existing housing choice vouchers, all project-based rental

assistance contracts, and all contracts under the Housing for the Elderly program. The THUD bill also [includes](#) a series of initiatives to address lead-based paint hazards in HUD's low-income housing units. For more information on the THUD bill, see the [April 25 Human Needs Report](#) and [this chart](#) from the National Low Income Housing Coalition that compares funding levels in the Senate THUD bill, the FY16 enacted levels, and President Obama's budget request.

A \$1.1 billion emergency supplemental spending package to fight **the Zika virus** emerged from the Senate on May 12, with the hopes of attaching it to the THUD appropriations bill. The Senate is expected to vote on this supplemental, which does not require offsetting cuts, as an amendment this week. Two other Zika proposals are also expected to be voted on in the Senate as early as May 17, including one that would provide the full \$1.9 billion requested by President Obama and another that would provide \$1.1 billion but would include \$1.2 billion in offsetting cuts, with the money coming from the Affordable Care Act's Prevention and Public Health Fund. The House is also expected to vote on a Zika proposal that would provide less than \$1 billion (the exact amount it would provide has not yet been revealed) and could require offsets to pay for it.

House leaders are still trying to pass **a budget**, this time by pairing [previously-proposed cuts](#) to mandatory programs (those not subject to the annual appropriations process) with the budget in an effort to satisfy more conservative Republicans. In this latest scenario, the [House budget](#) would adhere to the \$1.07 trillion topline number agreed to last fall, but the same bill would also include cuts that previously passed the House Ways and Means Committee and the House Energy and Commerce Committee. These cuts include eliminating the \$1.7 billion Social Services Block Grant, denying the Child Tax Credit to millions of children (mostly citizens) in low-income working immigrant families, eliminating the Prevention and Public Health Fund created under the Affordable Care Act, reducing Medicaid reimbursements to states for people in prison, and cutting federal funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program. It was also revealed on May 12 that House Republicans want to cut \$23.6 billion over 10 years from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) as part of this package. All told, these proposals would cut more than \$170 billion over a decade. Advocates have [condemned](#) both the House budget resolution and the additional cuts. Still, even with the additional proposed cuts in the bill text, it's uncertain if Republicans have enough support to pass the measure, which would need to pass the Senate and be signed by President Obama to take effect. While it appeared last week that the budget might come to the House floor this week, that timing is now uncertain.

Even if Representatives don't pass a budget, the House is now able to take up **appropriations bills on the floor**. Their failure to pass a FY17 budget or other agreement that would lock in place topline spending numbers for this fiscal year prohibited them from taking up appropriations bills before May 15. The House is expected to first take up the Military Construction-Veterans Affairs appropriations bill as early as this week. But disputes in the House over spending limits may continue to mean the future of spending bills is uncertain, and House leaders haven't yet agreed to spending limits for the 12 appropriations subcommittees, known as 302(b) allocations. House Democrats may choose to vote against any spending bills brought to the floor first if it looks like additional spending included in them will drain domestic funding and leave little left over for the bills that cover programs for low-income people that may come later.

In a move advocates strongly oppose, the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee on May 11 approved a FY17 bill that would take nearly \$16 billion from the **Pentagon's Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) account** for weapons programs and other uses that would normally come out of the Pentagon's base budget. This move would allow the Pentagon to increase its spending without technically violating the imposed spending caps, and it would also mean that overseas operations in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan (the primary purpose for OCO) would only be funded through April 2017 rather than through the entire fiscal year. The full House Appropriations Committee expected to take up the bill this week. The House Armed Services Committee approved a similar move in the FY17 defense authorization bill in April. Advocates like those at the National Priorities Project continue to point out that [excessive Pentagon spending](#) takes money away from [human needs programs](#) that could be funded instead.

Several other appropriations bills are expected to be taken up in the House or Senate Appropriations Committee or subcommittees this week as well. For more information on all things budget, see our [FY17 budget resource page](#) and our [April 25 Human Needs Report](#).

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Zika Packages Proposed, House Passes Opioid Bills, Flint Money Included in Senate Water Bill, Flint Webinar Resources Available

While Congress still hasn't approved emergency supplemental funding to assist with the fight against the Zika virus, the opioid epidemic, or the lead contamination crisis, there has been some movement in all three areas.

As was noted in the appropriations article in this *Human Needs Report*, a \$1.1 billion emergency supplemental spending package to fight **the Zika virus** emerged from the Senate on May 12, with the hopes of attaching it to the THUD appropriations bill. The Senate is expected to vote on this supplemental, which does not require offsetting cuts, as an amendment this week. Two other Zika proposals are expected to be voted on in the Senate as early as May 17, including one that would provide the full \$1.9 billion requested by President Obama and another that would provide \$1.1 billion but would include \$1.2 billion in offsetting cuts, with the money coming from the Affordable Care Act's Prevention and Public Health Fund. The House is also expected to vote on a Zika proposal that would provide less than \$1 billion (the exact amount it would provide has not yet been revealed) and could require offsets to pay for it. The White House had previously announced that \$589 million would be redirected from Ebola funding to fight the Zika virus. As CHN noted in this [blog post](#), major cuts to public health funding have left health departments unable to deal with a serious outbreak of the Zika virus, which has a potentially disparate impact on low-income people.

The House last week passed 17 bills related to the combatting **the prescription opioid and heroin epidemic**. On May 13, they voted to replace the text of a Senate-passed opioid bill (S.524) with the text of all of these bills combined. The amalgamated House bill would, among other things, establish Justice Department grants to help states expand programs for prevention and treatment of drug abuse, allow the funds to be used for treatment alternatives to incarceration for parents whose children would end

up in foster care, and make it easier for states to provide access to naloxone, an overdose-reversal drug. The House bill would authorize \$103 million annually for five years, roughly \$20 million more per year than the Senate bill. The House bill would require the money come from existing Justice Department funding, however. In fact, neither the House nor the Senate bills actually provide any additional emergency supplemental funding to fight the epidemic, despite repeated calls for this from Democrats and the White House. The House and Senate bills could now head to conference, where the differences in the bills would be worked out.

Money to aid Flint, Michigan and other communities affected by **lead-contaminated water** was included in a bill that passed the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee on April 28. The Water Resources Development Act reauthorization bill (S. 2848) would [authorize grants](#) of up to \$300 million over five years to help communities replace lead service lines, and would authorize \$1.4 billion in grants for small and poorer communities to comply with the Safe Drinking Water Act. Provisions in the bill are similar to the Drinking Water Safety and Infrastructure Act, legislation that advocates have been pushing for. When the bill might be taken up by the full Senate – and how the House will react – remains to be seen.

The Coalition on Human Needs co-hosted a webinar on May 3 that covered expert evidence about the consequences of lead poisoning in children, examples of work being done in Flint and Philadelphia to stop this scourge, and timely information about Congressional proposals to fund the solutions. **To view a recording of the webinar, [click here](#).**

For additional information on these emergency situations, see our [April 25 Human Needs Report](#).

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