



COALITION ON HUMAN NEEDS

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FY18 Appropriations Package Passed with Important Gains for Human Needs Programs

After months of negotiations, uncertainties, a shutdown, and multiple stopgap spending measures, Congress finally passed a \$1.3 trillion FY18 spending package to fund the federal government for the remainder of the fiscal year. The passage was not without last-minute drama, as President Trump tweeted a veto threat, but he signed the bill into law on Friday, March 23, the same day funding was set to expire. While topline spending caps for discretionary (annually appropriated) defense and nondefense programs were agreed upon in the [Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018](#) passed in February, the “omnibus” spending package, which combined the 12 required appropriations bills covering all government agencies for the rest of the fiscal year in one package, includes item-by-item spending details.

The spending package includes many wins for advocates and for the communities they fight for, as the Bipartisan Budget Act allowed for increases to many programs affecting low-income people. As CHN noted in its [statement](#) released on March 23, “After years of shrinking services, Congress approved final spending levels that will reduce the erosion that has occurred in many human needs program since 2010.”

The bill was also a win for advocates because many poison pill riders, or controversial policy changes, were left out of the bill. Top Democrats had threatened to withhold support for the omnibus if GOP

leaders included such controversial policy provisions. Some riders opposed by advocates that have been discussed included a mandate that the 2020 Census ask about citizenship status (although the Trump Administration has just announced it wants to add a citizenship question; see story elsewhere in this issue) and a repeal of the EPA's rule on clean drinking water. The [Clean Budget Coalition](#), of which CHN is a member, is compiling information and statements about the few harmful riders that remain.

The omnibus was not a win for all, however, as Dreamers remain unprotected. A summary of some of the highs and lows within the bill follows by department.

For more information, see the following summaries of the spending package from the [Senate Appropriations Committee Majority](#), [Senate Appropriations Committee Minority](#), [House Appropriations Committee Majority](#), and [House Appropriations Committee Minority](#). For statements from CHN members and additional analysis, see CHN's [FY18 budget resource page](#).

Department of Agriculture:

The omnibus included many important increases for nutrition programs for low-income children and adults. The omnibus bill includes \$28 million for the **Summer EBT program** to benefit children when school is not in session, which is \$5 million more than FY17 levels. It also includes \$6.175 billion for the **Special Supplemental Nutrition for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program**, which although less than the National WIC Association advocated for, is likely sufficient to meet expected need based on current estimates. The omnibus also includes a rescission of \$800 million (taking back unspent funds) from WIC, making the net available \$5.375 billion. Caseloads have been diminishing as the economy improves, but there are concerns that funds to administer WIC programs are tightening. The **Commodity Supplemental Food Program**, which distributes food boxes to low-income home-bound seniors, received \$238.1 million, an increase of \$2 million over FY17 levels; this program was proposed for elimination in President Trump's budget.

Mandatory spending for **SNAP/food stamps** is included at a level of [\\$74 billion](#) to cover all eligible participants. This is \$4.5 billion below FY17 levels due to declining enrollment; President Trump's budget included nearly 30 percent cuts to SNAP. **Child Nutrition Programs** received \$24.2 billion in mandatory funding to fully fund the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Summer Food Service Program, and Child and Adult Care Food Program, an increase of \$1.5 billion over FY17 levels.

Department of Education:

Overall, the Department of Education is funded at \$70.9 billion, up from \$66.8 billion in FY17. Some programs within the Education Department that received increases include **K-12 Special Education (IDEA) programs**, was increased by \$275 million to \$13 billion. **21st Century Community Learning Centers** (afterschool programs) received a \$20 million bump to \$1.2 billion, despite the fact that

President Trump's budget would have eliminated the program. **Title I grants** for low-income schools rose \$300 million to \$15.8 billion.

The **GEAR UP program**, which supports low-income students from high school into their first year of college (also slated for elimination in President Trump's budget), received a \$10 million bump to \$350 million. The federal **TRIO program**, which supports low-income, disabled and first-generation college students, was funded at \$60 million over FY17 levels to \$1 billion. Maximum **Pell Grant** awards will be increased by \$175 to \$6,095 per recipient. For more information, see [this statement](#) from the National Education Association.

Department of Health and Human Services:

There were several important increases in the HHS department budget, which is funded at \$98.7 billion, compared to \$87.1 billion in FY17. Funding for the **Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)** was increased by \$2.37 billion, from nearly \$2.9 billion to \$5.2 billion (a more than 80 percent increase in one year). This unprecedented gain puts funding for this critical program at its highest level in history. According to the [Center for Law and Social Policy \(CLASP\)](#), this boost in CCDBG funding will help an additional 151,370 children whose hard-working parents struggle to afford quality child care.

Head Start funding was increased by \$610 million to \$9.9 billion. **Senior Nutrition programs** received an increase of \$59 million to \$897 million. The **Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)** received an increase of \$250 million over FY17 to \$3.6 billion; President Trump's budget had slated LIHEAP for elimination for the second year in a row. Despite the increase, funding for LIHEAP is [still 38 percent](#) below FY10 levels. The **Community Services Block Grant**, which provides operating funds for community action programs nationwide, was flat-funded at \$715 million; this was another program proposed for termination in the Trump budget. Similarly, the Trump budget would have ended the **Social Services Block Grant**, which was level-funded at \$1.7 billion in the omnibus.

Overall, the omnibus included a \$3.2 billion increase for programs throughout the federal government to respond to the **opioid crisis**; an estimated \$2.55 - \$2.7 billion of this increase is in HHS funding. Such programs include prevention, treatment, and behavioral health workforce training within HHS, as well as law enforcement activities in other agencies.

HHS was given **emergency funding** to assist states and localities affected by disasters. The Centers for Disease Control, NIH, Administration for Children and Families, and the Office of the HHS Secretary received a combined \$1.062 billion.

The package did not include **health care changes** to help stabilize health care marketplaces, such as payments to insurance companies to help lower costs for lower-income marketplace enrollees (known as cost-sharing reductions, or CSRs), or funds for states to set up reinsurance programs that help pay for high-cost patients. **Community Health Centers** appropriations rose to \$1.625 billion, up from \$1.49 billion in FY 2017.

Many child welfare programs funded through annual appropriations were level-funded, but child protective services state grants provided under the **Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)** grew from \$25.3 million to \$85.3 million, and Adoption Incentive Grants rose from \$37.9 million to \$75 million. In addition, **Promoting Safe and Stable Families** appropriations increased to \$99.8 million, up from \$59.8 million in FY 2017.

Department of Homeland Security:

Advocates are happy that the funding for **Immigration and Customs Enforcement** in the omnibus package will require ICE to reduce the number of detention beds in use between now and the end of FY18. The bill also freezes the number of ICE agents but allows for the hiring of [135](#) new immigration agents and attorneys. It includes \$1.6 billion for border security measures, mostly for new or replacement fencing as opposed to the concrete wall President Trump has said he wants built, as well as hiring 328 new Customs and Border Protection officers.

Much to the disappointment of advocates, the legislation did not include a solution for participants in the **Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program**. Their fate remains in limbo, as Congress has failed to enact legislation to protect them and cases challenging the end of the program make their way through the courts. So far, the court decisions have required the Trump Administration to continue accepting renewals from current participants, but provide no protection for those who would be new enrollees. For more information on recent attempts to enact a fix for Dreamers, see the [March 5 Human Needs Report](#).

Department of Housing and Urban Development:

According to the [National Low Income Housing Coalition](#), the bill provides HUD programs with \$4.7 billion in funding over FY17, which is a 10 percent increase. The spending bill renews all **Housing Choice Vouchers** and provides new vouchers to veterans and people with disabilities, allocates nearly \$1 billion in additional funding to repair and operate **public housing**, and boosts funding for the **HOME Investment Partnerships program (HOME)** to the highest level in seven years. Moreover, the final bill includes none of the rent increases proposed by President Trump in his budget request.

The bill provides \$678 million to the **Section 202 Housing for the Elderly program**, enough to renew all existing contracts and provide \$105 million for capital advance and project-based rental assistance awards. The bill also increases funding for the **Section 811 Housing for People with Disabilities program** to \$229 million, \$83.4 million more than the FY17 level. Of that amount, \$82.6 million would go to capital advance and project rental assistance awards.

The bill would increase funding for the **HOME program** by \$412 million over FY17, to \$1.36 billion, and the **Community Development Block Grant program** by \$305 million, to \$3.365 billion. Overall, HOME

would be funded at \$1.362 billion, while CDBG would receive \$3.365 billion. President Trump had proposed to eliminate both programs in FY18. The **Choice Neighborhoods Initiative** saw a funding increase when compared to last year's allocation, from \$138 million to \$150 million. The bill provides \$230 million to the **Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes'** grants, an \$85 million increase over FY17. For more information, see [this piece](#) from the National Low Income Housing Coalition as well as their [updated budget chart](#).

Department of Labor:

Several important programs within the Department of Labor received increases as well, as the agency's budget was increased by \$192 million over FY17 to \$12.2 billion. **Job Corps** vocational training programs received \$15 million more than FY17, to \$1.7 billion. **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs**, which help people with barriers to work gain new skills and find employment, is funded at \$2.8 billion, \$80 million more than FY17. **Apprenticeship Grants** received a \$50 million boost to \$145 billion.

In a significant win for tipped workers, language was included in the bill preventing employers from keeping tips received by employees. A rule previously proposed by the Trump administration would have allowed for the confiscation of tips as long as the tipped employees are paid full minimum wage. For more information, see the [February 9 Human Needs Report](#) and the [National Employment Law Project](#).

Other areas of note:

In the area of **gun safety**, the omnibus included [two relatively limited provisions](#) to help ensure that state and federal agencies provide timely, accurate records to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS). According to [The Hill](#), the omnibus also clarifies that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention can research gun violence as a public health issue (such research was previously prohibited by Congress). However, the bill doesn't provide specific money to carry out such research, and because of this, advocates and public health experts are leery that any progress will be made on this front. Advocates were also disappointed that stronger language, such as requiring background checks for all gun sales, banning assault style weapons, and ensuring domestic abusers can't own firearms, was not included in the bill. For more information on recent attempts to enact gun safety legislation, see the [March 5 Human Needs Report](#).

The bill included \$2.8 billion for the **Census Bureau**, \$1.3 billion higher than in FY17; this includes \$2.1 billion to fund preparations for the 2020 Decennial Census. Despite the increase, advocates believe the Census Bureau remains underfunded. The **Legal Services Corporation**, which provides legal assistance for low-income people with housing, domestic violence, employment, consumer or other legal trouble, received a boost of \$25 million to \$410 million; President Trump's budget eliminated the program. The

Corporation for National and Community Service, which runs programs including AmeriCorps, VISTA and Senior Corp, received a boost of \$34 million to \$1 billion; this program was also eliminated in Trump's budget.

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Farm Bill May Move after Congressional Recess

A Farm Bill, which includes the legislation authorizing SNAP/food stamps, could be taken up in the House Agriculture Committee shortly after Congress returns from its Spring recess. However, advocates are concerned that the bill will include deep cuts and harmful changes to SNAP. Reports that Committee Chairman Mike Conaway (R-TX) planned to include expanded SNAP work requirements on some parents and older adults met with much opposition, and there may be other restrictions that deny assistance to people in need. In response to the anticipated proposal, Agriculture Committee Ranking Member Collin Peterson (D-MN) stood united with his Democratic colleagues on the committee, issuing a [statement](#) saying, "The Democratic members of the Agriculture Committee are unanimous in their opposition to the extreme, partisan policies being advocated by the Majority. This opposition will not change." Democrats on the Committee have also declared that negotiations will not continue until they see actual bill text from the Chairman Conaway.

The Farm Bill has historically been a bipartisan bill, but it is now expected that the bill to be released by Chairman Conaway will not be based on negotiations with Democrats. According to the [Food Research & Action Center](#) (FRAC), a bipartisan Farm Bill from Senate Agriculture Committee Pat Roberts (R-KS) and Ranking Member Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) could be marked up before the Memorial Day recess.

In addition, the USDA has requested public comments on whether it should reconsider certain rules regarding SNAP's three-month time limit for adults not raising minor children. Advocates are concerned that the Trump administration will use this opportunity to use the regulatory process to expand the number of people who are subject to the time limit and take away states' ability to extend the limit to certain individuals. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Feeding America, and FRAC are working together to urge advocates to submit comments to the USDA before the April 9 deadline.

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Commerce Secretary Ross Announces 2020 Census Will Include Citizenship Question

U.S. Department of Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross announced on March 26 that the Trump Administration intends to add a question about citizenship to the 2020 Census. The full list of questions for the decennial census must be sent to Congress by March 31, which has the authority to reject questions. The Census is constitutionally mandated to count every person in the U.S., regardless of immigration status, and the counts of all persons are used in determining a state's number of congressional seats, legislative district lines, and funding levels for many federal grant programs to

states or localities. Many advocates and state officials are highly critical of the Administration's stance, believing that in the midst of heightened anti-immigrant enforcement activities and policies, including a citizenship question on the Census will discourage people from returning the Census form. This is likely to worsen the undercount of low-income people, people of color, and children. In the 2010 Census, children were significantly undercounted.

California's Attorney General Xavier Becerra announced that he would be bringing suit against the federal government to force them to drop this question, and it is likely that other states that stand to lose congressional seats or federal funding will also sue.

Secretary Ross' decision was pursuant to a request by the Justice Department to add the question. Ross sent a [memo](#) to the Justice Department agreeing to the addition, noting that there was no conclusive evidence about whether the question would deter people from filling out the census form. This lack of knowledge about the impact is one of the reasons cited by organizations and states for opposing the citizenship question. The Census Bureau's American Community Survey, with a sample of approximately 3,000 respondents, annually asks a citizenship question, so there is another source for immigrant status information.

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