



COALITION ON HUMAN NEEDS

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Senate to Take up Spending Cuts Package This Week

The Senate will take up the White House's proposed package of domestic spending cuts, also known as rescissions, this week, just in time to meet the June 22nd deadline for using special rules that would allow the package to pass with a simple majority vote. While Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) had previously not said whether he would bring up the package, the bill's sponsor, Sen. Mike Lee (R-UT), collected signatures from 20 senators to trigger a little-used rule in the Senate to force the bill out of committee and onto the floor. The House narrowly passed ([210-206](#)) the package, which totals nearly \$15 billion in cuts, on June 6; 19 Republicans joined all Democrats in opposing it. All Democrats in the Senate are expected to oppose it too, and its passage in the Senate is not a done deal, since several Republican Senators have also voiced concerns about the package.

Proposed by the Trump Administration, the package would cut roughly \$7 billion from the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), including nearly \$1.9 billion from a CHIP reserve fund that could make it harder for states to respond to rising enrollments in the aftermath of disasters or rising unemployment. According to the [National Low Income Housing Coalition](#), the package includes \$220

million in rescinded funds from housing, rental assistance, and community revitalization efforts that, if passed, would exacerbate the affordable housing crisis in this country. The rescission specifically targets funds for a program that helps improve the outcomes of public housing residents and helps them to gain self-sufficiency. The package also cuts or “rescinds” \$800 million from a program that funds Medicare and Medicaid innovations – a program that is estimated to save \$3 for every \$1 spent. Other unspent funds to be rescinded have previously been approved by Congress as part of bipartisan agreements that allow needed increases in health, education, and other important programs.

In an effort to get more votes for the package in the House, the Trump Administration revised the package to eliminate some other controversial cuts, including money to fight the Ebola virus in Africa and funds to help victims of Superstorm Sandy. The current Senate version of the package mirrors the original Trump proposal, before the revisions, though that could change. The Congressional Budget Office, Congress’s nonpartisan scorekeeper, has said the rescissions plan would reduce the deficit by \$1.1 billion over the next decade (the estimate of deficit reduction is so low because CBO estimates that under current law, much of the money would not be spent). Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney had said additional rescissions packages may follow in the coming months.

Once OMB sends a rescissions request to Congress, Congress has 45 days to vote on all of it, part of it, or none of it, and rescissions can be passed with a simple majority in both chambers. According to *CQ*, even without congressional action, the funding proposed in the request is frozen for 45 days. And because the days are counted when Congress is in session, funds proposed for cancellation could be blocked for months, especially considering the congressional calendar in an election year. However, Congress can reject the rescissions sooner, and, if Congress takes no action to approve the rescissions, funding is reinstated at the end of the 45 legislative day period.

Advocates oppose the rescissions not only because of the bad cuts to housing, health, and other programs, but because they believe the loss of these dollars will make it harder to provide adequate funding levels for human needs priorities in FY19 and beyond. Funds that are genuinely not needed have been the source for increases in other domestic programs; if these funds become unavailable, such increases cannot occur. CHN was joined by 150 national organizations in sending a [letter](#) to Congress opposing the cuts. While many human needs programs received funding increases in FY18 over FY17 levels, new [research](#) by CHN found that [nearly 70 percent](#) of more than 181 important human needs programs tracked have lost ground since FY 2010 after adjusting for inflation. This and future rescissions packages, if approved, would prevent continuing the progress made this year in restoring adequate funding levels for these programs. The rescissions package would also set a dangerous precedent for undoing bipartisan spending decisions. For more information, see CHN’s [statement](#) on the rescissions package.

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FY19 Spending Season in Full Swing

Fiscal Year 2019 spending season is in full swing, with appropriations work taking place in both chambers. In fact, the House passed ([235-179](#)) its first group of FY19 spending bills, or “minibus,” on June 8. The minibus combined three of the 12 required spending bills – Energy and Water, Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and the Legislative Branch – and passed mainly along party lines. The Senate could take up its first minibus, which could consist of that chamber’s versions of the same three spending bills, as early as this week. Below are just a few of the highlights and lowlights from some of the bills that have moved in the past month:

- The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education approved (voice vote) its spending bill on Friday, June 15. The largest of the nondefense spending bills and also one of the most contentious, the \$177 billion bill would provide a \$43 million increase for the Department of Education (essentially flat funding for the department’s \$71 billion budget), a \$1 billion increase for the for the Department of Health and Human Services to \$89.2 billion, and an \$88.8 million decrease for the Labor Department to \$12.1 billion. In the Labor Department, the National Labor Relations Board would be cut by \$12.9 million, and the NLRB is also the subject of partisan policy riders that advocates oppose. The Employment Training Administration would be cut by \$216 million. Several programs received flat funding from 2018, including state grants for adult employment and training, dislocated workers and youth activities; programs for ex-offenders; programs for migrant and seasonal farmworkers; and Job Corp. In education, the maximum Pell Grant award would stay the same as in FY18. IDEA special education grants to states would increase by \$50 million. TRIO and GEAR UP programs for first-generation college students would see increases. Funding for charter schools would increase by 12 percent. However, citizenship education and safe school funds for low-income, high poverty schools would be cut, as would certain school safety programs. Head Start would receive a \$50 million increase. The Child Care and Development Block Grant would be flat funded (maintaining the large \$2.37 billion increase that occurred this year), and the Community Services Block Grant would receive a \$35 million increase. The bill defunds the Affordable Care Act and eliminates the Center for Disease Control’s Climate Change program. The Republican summary of the bill can be found [here](#). Rep. Nita Lowey (D-NY), the subcommittee’s highest ranking Democrat, [said](#) the bill “is filled with misplaced priorities and missed opportunities.” The full House Appropriations Committee is expected to take up the bill the week of June 25, the same week the Senate is expected to release its Labor-HHS-Education bill.
- The Senate Transportation-Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Committee passed its bill on June 7. The spending bill includes a \$1.8 billion, or 4 percent, boost in funding for HUD over FY18, rejecting the President’s call to cut the department by 13 percent. The Senate bill also funds HUD at \$1 billion above the House bill. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, the Senate bill fully funds all existing rental assistance contracts and includes additional resources to provide an estimated 7,600 new vouchers to veterans and youth aging out of the foster care system. The Senate bill also increases funding for public housing, Homeless Assistance Grants, Family Self-Sufficiency, and Healthy Homes & Lead Hazard Control.

The bill renews all contracts for Section 811 Housing for Persons with Disabilities and provides enough funding for new construction under Section 202 Housing for the Elderly. The HOME Investment Partnerships program and Community Development Block Grants would be funded at 2018 levels, despite calls for elimination by the president. The Choice Neighborhoods program, however, receives a \$50 million cut. For more details, see the National Low Income Housing Coalition's [full analysis of the Senate bill](#) and the [House bill](#), and their [updated budget chart](#).

- The Senate Interior-Environment Appropriations Subcommittee passed its bill on June 12 without a number of contentious policy changes, known as “riders,” that would roll back environmental protections regarding clean water and endangered species. The House version of the bill contained many of these partisan riders.

Despite the forward motion of the spending bills, many are already expecting that a stopgap spending bill will be needed to keep the government open from the time the new fiscal year begins on October 1 through sometime after the November elections.

According to *CQ (Congressional Quarterly)*, the House Budget Committee may take up a FY19 budget resolution as early as this week. Committee Chairman Steve Womack (R-AR) is expected to produce a budget resolution that includes special rules known as reconciliation instructions. Using the reconciliation process allows measures with a budgetary impact (like extending or making permanent the individual tax cuts in the 2017 tax bill, cutting entitlement programs, or a repeal of much of the Affordable Care Act) to be passed in the Senate with only a simple majority instead of the usual 60-vote threshold required in that chamber. However, this only holds true if the Senate also passes a FY19 budget. Senate Budget Chairman Michael Enzi (R-WY) has not indicated whether he plans to take up a similar budget in that chamber, but most reports are that the Senate is highly unlikely to complete action on a budget resolution.

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Senate to Take Up Bipartisan Farm Bill, While House to Vote Again on Harmful SNAP Cuts

The Senate Agriculture Committee approved (20-1) its bipartisan [version](#) of the Farm Bill on June 13, clearing the bill for Senate floor action as early as this week. The bill includes the reauthorization of SNAP/food stamps but without the deep cuts and harmful changes to SNAP that were included in the bill the House rejected on May 18. The Senate bill maintains current work requirements and eligibility requirements, unlike the House bill that expanded work requirements and tightened eligibility requirements. The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) [called](#) the Senate bill, “carefully considered, positive, and bipartisan,” and the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) [said](#) the Senate version was “a farm bill that works for everyone.” Advocates are concerned that harmful amendments related to work requirements, eligibility restrictions, and privatization will surface when the bill comes to the

Senate floor, and they are working to urge senators to reject bad amendments and preserve the bipartisan nature of the bill. The bill will need 60 votes to pass the Senate.

Even though the House bill was rejected in May, House leaders may bring the bill back up for another vote this week. Some members of the right-wing House Freedom Caucus opposed the bill in May because they wanted the GOP leadership to first take up a conservative-backed immigration bill that advocates oppose. The House is expected to vote on this and another harmful immigration bill this week (see related article in this *Human Needs Report* for more information on this), and then take up its version of the Farm Bill again. Under the rules, the House only has until June 22 to re-vote on the Farm Bill, although it could vote to extend that deadline. Advocates strongly oppose the House Farm Bill, which the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) [estimates](#) would cause more than 1 million low-income households with more than 2 million people – particularly low-income working families with children – to lose their benefits altogether or have them reduced. Roughly 265,000 children in low-income families would also lose access to free meals at school. For more information about the harsh work requirements and other bad changes in the House Farm Bill, see the [May 21 Human Needs Report](#), CHN’s [Protecting Basic Needs resource page](#), and the [recording](#) of a webinar CHN cosponsored with CBPP, Feeding America, and FRAC.

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Immigration Bills in Flux in the House

The House is expected to vote this week on two immigration bills opposed by advocates, but the future of the votes is uncertain. The more restrictive of the two bills, sponsored by Rep. Bob Goodlatte (R-VA), is considered by advocates to be extremely anti-immigrant. It would make historic cuts to the number of immigrants, end the family-based immigration system and the diversity visa lottery, provide no path to citizenship for Dreamers (people who were brought to the U.S. as children), and make unlawful presence in the U.S. a criminal offense instead of a civil one, in addition to other harmful provisions. Some moderate Republicans had been working with their conservative counterparts on a second immigration bill that, while maintaining many of the harmful pieces of the Goodlatte bill, would create a new merit-based visa program for Dreamers. The planned votes were temporarily thrown for a loop on June 15, however, when President Trump said he would not support the more “moderate” bill, which advocates and Democrats were already opposed to. However, President Trump’s position changed later that day, so that it appears he would sign either bill. He is expected to meet with House Republicans about the bills on Tuesday, June 19. Any bill would need Democratic support to pass the 60-vote threshold in the Senate.

Advocates had been supportive of efforts by Democrats and several Republicans in the House to take up four immigration bills, with one of the bills being a clean [Dream Act](#) to provide a pathway to permanent residency and eventual citizenship for Dreamers. However, signatures from 218 representatives were needed to force votes on four bills, and supporters were only able to secure 216 signatures. House

Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) had previously promised members of the conservative House Freedom Caucus a vote on the Goodlatte bill in exchange for their vote on the House Farm Bill, which is also expected to be taken up again this week (see the related article in this *Human Needs Report* for more information on that topic).

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Advocates Take Steps to Stop Family Separations at the Border

On June 17, Father's Day, members of Congress and demonstrators opposed to the separation of immigrant children and their parents arrived at detention facilities in McAllen, Texas and in New Jersey. In McAllen, Rep. Vincente Gonzales (D-TX) said he estimated [more than 100 children younger than 6](#) were being held there. Previously, advocates from across the country joined together at [events](#) in more than 60 towns and cities on June 14 to protest the Trump Administration's policy of separating immigrant children from their parents at U.S. borders. On June 7, more than 540 state and national child development, child welfare and juvenile justice groups, including several CHN members, that sent [a letter](#) to Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen calling for the Department to stop the practice, saying that it "will have significant and long-term consequences for the safety, health, development and well-being of children."

Member of Congress also protested the policy; 38 Democratic senators and two Independent senators joined together in a [a similar letter](#) demanding an end to the Trump Administration's policy. The letter reads, in part, "Your Administration's decision to separate children from their parents is cruel, unnecessary, and goes against our values as Americans."

Former First Lady Laura Bush agreed in an opinion piece published in the [Washington Post](#). She wrote "I live in a border state. I appreciate the need to enforce and protect our international boundaries, but this zero-tolerance policy is cruel. It is immoral. And it breaks my heart."

Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced in April the Administration's so-called "zero-tolerance" policy of separating children from their families, even when the families legally present themselves at the border with a request for asylum because they are fleeing gangs or other danger at home. At least 2,700 children have been taken from their parents since October 2017, close to 2,000 of them during the six weeks between April 18 and May 31. Many children are being held in detention centers and other institutional facilities; federal authorities are running out of space to house them and are have started to erect tents on the grounds of three Texas military bases.

Contrary to the repeated assertions of President Trump, there is no law requiring the Administration to separate children from their parents. The Administration has on its own initiated the policy of bringing criminal charges against parents crossing the border; that has not been done routinely in the past. Instead, most parents with children have been released with the order to appear later in court. When parents have legal representation, they show up at court dates. [The Family Case Management Program](#)

[provided lawyers](#), and 99 percent of the families appeared in court. This program has been canceled by the Trump Administration. Senator Dianne Feinstein, joined by a growing number of co-sponsoring senators (48 at press time), introduced the [Keep Families Together Act](#), which would prevent DHS from taking children from their parents at the border. Although there have been claims that one of the immigration bills headed to the House floor this week would end family separation, this is not the case, according to immigration experts. This House bill, now being negotiated by Speaker Ryan, would allow children and parents to be detained together, although it would not prevent continued separation, and would also significantly weaken current protections for children against prolonged detention. For more on the issue of family separation, see [this blog](#) from CHN.

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