



COALITION ON HUMAN NEEDS

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House Poised to Pass First FY20 Spending Package

The House of Representatives is poised to pass a package of four of the 12 required spending bills to keep the federal government operating after the new fiscal year begins on October 1. The “minibus” package (H.R. 2740) consists of the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education spending bill; the Defense bill; the Energy and Water bill; and the State and Foreign Operations bill. Dozens of amendments were voted on during floor proceedings last week, with hundreds of additional amendments on tap before a final vote on the package, which is expected this week. The Trump Administration has issued a [Statement of Administration Policy](#) saying it would recommend a veto if the minibus reaches his desk.

Following completion of the first spending package, the House is expected to take up a second minibus package (H.R. 3055) consisting of the Agriculture spending bill; the Transportation and Housing and Urban Development bill; the Commerce, Justice, and Science bill; the Interior-Environment bill; and the Military Construction and Veterans’ Affairs bill. The package also includes back pay for an [estimated 580,000 federal contractors](#) who were furloughed or had to work without pay during the partial government shutdown that ended in January. The three remaining spending bills – the Financial Services

bill, the Homeland Security bill, and the Legislative Branch bill – are also expected to pass the House floor before Congress leaves for its July 4 recess.

The House Appropriations Committee approved the top-line spending limits for these 12 FY20 spending bills in May (\$631 billion for domestic/international programs, also known as non-defense discretionary; \$733 billion for defense), but these levels are not binding in the Senate. A new bipartisan deal to raise tight spending caps put in place by the 2011 Budget Control Act still needs to be reached with the Senate and signed by the President, if Congress is to avoid the deep cuts required by the 2011 law. Without legislation to lift the caps, non-defense discretionary programs would be cut by \$54 billion and defense by \$71 billion in FY20, compared to FY19 levels. While a deal to lift the austere spending caps for the next two fiscal years is preferred, there is talk on Capitol Hill that a one-year deal may be more achievable: both Senate Appropriations Chair Richard Shelby (R-AL) and House Budget Chair John Yarmuth (D-KY) mentioned the possibility of a one-year agreement over the weekend

Senate Appropriations Chair Shelby previously said he would not agree to the House spending limits and suggested that in the absence of an agreement to lift the caps, his Committee would write spending bills to the lower numbers required by existing law, with the expectation that they could add funds if there was an agreement to lift the statutory caps. The latest report is that the Senate Appropriations Committee could begin taking up its own versions of FY20 spending bills after Congress returns from its July 4 recess, even if an agreement between the House, the Senate, and the White House on spending limits hasn't been reached by then.

President Trump's FY20 budget retained the spending caps, but in order to increase military spending proposed a huge increase in the uncapped Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) account, from \$69 billion to \$165 billion. Now reports are that the Administration would prefer a year-long stop-gap spending measure (known as a Continuing Resolution, or CR) for FY20, which would provide level funding from FY19 (\$597 billion for domestic/international programs). However, advocates contend that, because of a need for increased funding for the 2020 Census, veterans' health care, and other programs, flat funding would actually result in a roughly \$20 billion loss for other human needs programs.

For more information on what's in some of the bills the House is voting on, see [the May 20 Human Needs Report](#).

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Congress Finally Passes, Trump Finally Signs Disaster Aid Bill

On Thursday, June 6, President Trump signed a long-awaited and long-delayed \$19.1 billion disaster relief bill. The package will provide billions of dollars to areas struggling to recover from wildfires, hurricanes, flooding, and other natural disasters.

Notably, the funds include \$1 billion in aid for Puerto Rico, including \$600 million for the island's Nutrition Assistance Program and \$300 million in Community Development Block Grant funding. The Puerto Rican assistance had become a point of contention between both Democrats and Republicans in Congress and Trump, who repeatedly has overstated the amount of money Puerto Rico has received and has mischaracterized how it has been spent. The funds also include Medicaid assistance for American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Marianas.

The legislation includes \$2.4 billion for Community Development Block Grant funds to address disasters that have occurred since 2017, \$3 billion for the Agriculture Department to cover producers' losses from those disasters, and \$720 million for the Forest Service to repay money spent fighting last year's forest fires.

According to the *Washington Post*, the bill is among the broadest pieces of disaster legislation to have been considered by Congress, both in the scope of aid and the number of disasters addressed. The newspaper noted that those disasters include Hurricanes Maria, Florence, and Michael; Typhoon Mangkhut, Super Typhoon Yutu and Tropical Storm Gita; plus wildfires in California, volcanic eruptions in Hawaii, and an earthquake in Alaska.

CHN noted [in a statement](#) that 1.3 million Puerto Ricans saw their nutrition assistance benefits significantly cut and people across the United States were hurt by Trump's hostility toward the U.S. territory, and the impasse caused by Trump's intransigence delayed aid to many other places as well.

"Communities battered by natural disasters should not have to wait three years or more for help in rebuilding," CHN Executive Director Deborah Weinstein said. "People struggling to put their lives back together should not see their food assistance slashed. They should not have to wonder whether there will continue to be enough Medicaid funding to cover their medical treatment. A slow government response should not *add* to the damage farmers sustained."

Weinstein added that CHN members and allies spent months sending letters to Congress and making visits to congressional offices to make sure that disaster aid was passed for all who were affected, states and territories alike. "Those months of insistence made a difference," she said.

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House Approves American Dream and Promise Act; Meanwhile, Advocates Brace for Census Ruling

The House on June 4 passed the [American Dream and Promise Act of 2019](#), a measure that would offer a path to citizenship to more than 2 million undocumented immigrants, including Dreamers.

The bill, which passed [237 to 187](#), would grant Dreamers 10 years of legal residence status if they meet certain requirements. They would then receive permanent green cards after completing at least two years of higher education or military service, or after working for three years.

The measure would provide long-awaited clarity to the millions of Dreamers who for years have been caught in legal limbo. The Obama Administration granted work permits to many of them through the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, but President Trump called for an end of the program in late 2017. Its fate rests with the Supreme Court, which may take up the issue during its next term.

[In a statement](#), CHN Executive Director Deborah Weinstein said the vote “was a long time coming.”

“It was made possible by the courage of Dreamers and immigrants here through Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) status,” she said. “They came forward to remind us that they are essential members of our communities. Fighting alongside them are their neighbors, extended families, colleagues, fellow students, congregants, and others who recognize that we cannot afford to lose them.”

CHN members heralded the vote.

“Today is an historic step for Dreamers, TPS holders, and DED recipients,” [said](#) Sister Simone Campbell, SSS, Executive Director of NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice. “While the struggle for comprehensive immigration reform goes on, we need to protect immigrants from President Trump’s attacks now. That’s why the Catholic Sisters and activists of NETWORK were so proud to support the passage of the American Dream and Promise Act in the House. The Senate must quickly follow suit to provide a pathway to citizenship and protection from deportation for our immigrant sisters and brothers. These are valued community members with inherent dignity who must be protected.”

[In a statement](#), UnidosUS called the vote “an urgently needed step towards protecting DACA and TPS holders, who are integral to American society.”

“We thank Congresswomen Roybal-Allard and Velazquez for shepherding this measure as well as Speaker Pelosi for her leadership. For far too long, DACA recipients and TPS holders have been forced to a life in limbo because of the cruel decisions and actions of the Trump administration. Today’s vote represents a good-faith effort from Congressional leaders to fix the problem and deliver on a measure that has the [backing of the American people](#).

Also relating to immigration: immigrant advocates are bracing themselves for an anticipated U.S. Supreme Court ruling on whether the 2020 Census will include a question relating to citizenship. As has been well documented, such a question would create a massive undercount, particularly among communities of color and households with children. The court ruling could come any time between Monday, June 17 and the end of June. The Census Bureau has said that it must begin printing the Census questionnaires by the beginning of July.

Last week, the Trump Administration, responding to a congressional investigation into why the citizenship question was proposed in the first place, refused to turn over relevant documents to the House Oversight and Reform Committee, citing executive privilege.

In response, Vanita Gupta, President and CEO of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, which is playing a lead role in opposing the citizenship question, said the Trump Administration's action is further proof that the citizenship question was added "to depress participation in the census by communities of color."

"Every revelation since the question was first proposed has reinforced that fact," she [said in a statement](#). "The Trump Administration has deployed a dizzying array of false pretexts for adding the question, ignored Census Bureau findings that the question would lead to an inaccurate count, and dismissed unmistakable evidence regarding the political motivation behind the question. Through it all, keeping vulnerable communities from accessing their duly deserved resources and representation has remained the focal point of the Administration's efforts."

Plaintiffs in suits against the inclusion of the citizenship question filed additional evidence of racial bias with a federal court in Maryland after it was revealed that Thomas Hofeller, a recently deceased Republican expert on gerrymandering political districts, had written reports for Republicans about the impact of a citizenship question in skewing political representation towards white non-Hispanic voters, and had been in [communication with a Census Bureau staff person](#) to share that information.

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Bill Introduced to Boost Tax Credits for Working Families

On June 6, Reps. Dan Kildee (D-MI) and Dwight Evans (D-PA) introduced a bill that would substantially expand the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC). The Working Families Tax Relief Act ([H.R. 3157](#)) is the House counterpart to a Senate bill ([S. 1138](#)) introduced in April by Democratic Sens. Sherrod Brown (OH), Michael Bennet (CO), Richard Durbin (IL), and Ron Wyden (OR). The Senate bill currently has 46 cosponsors.

As previously reported on CHN's blog, [Voices for Human Needs](#), the bill would expand and improve the EITC and CTC in multiple ways. Specifically, the bill would expand the EITC for families with children by approximately 25 percent; significantly expand the EITC for workers who aren't raising children in their homes (the sole group that the federal tax code taxes into, or deeper into, poverty); make the credit available for people starting at age 19 up to age 67; and provide a match for Puerto Rico's new EITC. Additionally, the bill would make the CTC fully refundable so children in households with little or no earnings will benefit from it. It would also establish a higher Young Child Tax Credit (YCTC) for families with children under six years old.

The [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#) estimates that the legislation would raise the incomes of 46 million low- and moderate-income households with 114 million people. It would lift 29 million people, including 11 million children, above or closer to the poverty line.

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