

# Chapter 2: Budget Proposals

The congressional budget process calls for an authorization to be made before appropriations are provided for federal activities. The authorization process allows for regular scrutiny and review of federal activities. When followed, this process establishes, continues, discontinues, or modifies federal agencies or programs. Yet, lawmakers rarely follow the authorization process. This evades the careful congressional scrutiny of programs and agencies that congressional rules require and federal taxpayers deserve. Congress should authorize only those programs that represent federal constitutional priorities, eliminating funding for activities that the federal government should not undertake. No funds should be provided for activities that have not been authorized.

The appropriations process calls on Congress to pass appropriations bills (currently 12 in number) each year, before the start of the government's fiscal year on October 1. Appropriations are supposed to fund the government's operations for that fiscal year (FY). The appropriations bills cover a number of policy areas such as defense, health, energy, and agriculture, among others. Spending on programs funded annually through appropriations bills (often referred to as "discretionary spending" as distinguished from so-called "mandatory spending" for which Congress has passed laws making permanent appropriations instead of periodic appropriations) currently makes up about one-third of the total federal budget. Two-thirds of spending goes for "mandatory spending" and payment of interest on the national debt.

Congress should review programs during the authorization and appropriation process to ensure

that they fall within the powers delegated to the United States by the Constitution, as ours is a federal government of limited powers. Congress should also use the appropriations bills, like other bills, to advance important policy objectives, within the limits of its authority. Congress can do so, for example, by adding provisions, known as "riders," that direct or prohibit the use of funds for specified purposes.

Congress should determine whether:

1. Eliminating the program would increase opportunity or reduce favoritism;
2. The program would better serve the American people if it were administered and financed by the private sector;
3. The program would be better administered by state or local governments; or
4. The program is wasteful or duplicative.

This chapter provides proposals to reduce and reform mandatory and discretionary programs and agencies for the FY 2018 budget process. Some of the proposals produce savings in defense programs; those savings should be shifted to higher priority defense programs, to help achieve a stronger national defense. If enacted, these proposals would significantly reduce the size and scope of the federal government, reining in federal bureaucrats, to unleash the economic potential of the United States, enhance individual freedom, and strengthen civil society.