

NAFSA Guide to the Appropriations Process

Appropriation bills generally provide funding for federal programs and agencies through the two step process described below:

1 Authorization

Authorization bills create, continue, or modify a federal agency or program. A program must be authorized before funding can be allocated to it.

2 Appropriation

Appropriation bills provide funding for federal agencies and programs. This process occurs every year and takes eight months or more to complete.

I. In February, the President submits a budget proposal for the next fiscal year to Congress. The federal fiscal year runs from October 1st - September 30th.



II. After receiving the President's proposal, the House and Senate Budget Committees vote on their budget resolutions, setting ceilings for federal spending.



III. After the budget resolutions pass, each Appropriations subcommittee then drafts a funding bill for those programs or agencies under its jurisdiction.



IV. When agreed upon in the subcommittee, these bills are then sent on to the full Appropriations Committee (where they may be modified) and then onto the full chamber (House/Senate) (where they again may be modified). Traditionally, this process begins in the House of Representatives.



V. Once each chamber passes their respective funding bills, any differences are resolved in a conference committee. A conference committee is a temporary committee that negotiates a compromise between the differences in the House and Senate versions of a bill.



VI. Once the bills pass the House and Senate in identical form, they go to the President, who can decide to sign the bills into law or veto the bills.



VII. If the President vetoes an appropriation bill, Congress may attempt to "override the veto," requiring a two-thirds majority vote.