



THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S
OBSTRUCTION OF THE
APPROPRIATIONS PROCESS

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To develop the 12 annual appropriations acts, Congress relies on the executive branch to share reliable spending information. For decades, executive branch agencies have provided the Appropriations Committees with information on past spending and future funding needs. This enables Congress to monitor spending decisions, evaluate agency performance, and draft appropriations acts that reflect agencies' needs and congressional priorities. The Trump Administration, however, has departed from this practice by withholding and concealing spending information from Congress.

The administration has obstructed Congress in two primary ways. First, agencies have delayed, withheld, or submitted incomplete spending plans to the Appropriations Committees. Second, the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has concealed how it allocates appropriations to agencies, a process known as *apportionment*. These actions have prevented Congress from tracking how agencies spent their fiscal year 2025 (FY25) appropriations and from developing new FY26 regular appropriations acts. These actions make it difficult for Congress to exercise its constitutional spending powers and to oversee the executive branch's spending decisions.

Concealing Spending Information from Congress

In March 2025, Congress enacted a full-year continuing resolution for the remainder of fiscal year 2025.¹ Because Congress needed information about how the administration was going to spend the CR's funding in order to begin developing the FY26 regular appropriations acts, the law required agencies to submit detailed spending plans within 45 days.²

Many agencies missed this deadline or submitted plans that concealed their spending decisions.³ The Department of Health and Human Services labeled its submission "Hill Version" – suggesting it created a separate budget document for Congress – and replaced line-item dollar amounts with asterisks for over 500 programs. The Department of Education submitted multiple

¹ U.S. Congress, *Full-Year Continuing Appropriations And Extensions Act, 2025* (Public Law 119-4) (<https://www.congress.gov/119/plaws/publ4/PLAW-119publ4.pdf>).

² U.S. Congress, *Full-Year Continuing Appropriations And Extensions Act, 2025*, section 1113 (Public Law 119-4) (<https://www.congress.gov/119/plaws/publ4/PLAW-119publ4.pdf>).

³ Reuters, *Trump Administration Leaves Congress in the Dark on Spending Decisions* (July 14, 2025) (<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-administration-leaves-congress-dark-spending-decisions-2025-07-14/>).

spending plans that listed billions of dollars as “unallocated,” defying statutory instructions to allocate the funding. Other agencies withheld program-level details in their spending plans.⁴

The Appropriations Committees have criticized these actions on a bipartisan basis, warning that the administration blocked information Congress needs to develop appropriations. The Senate Appropriations Committee said the Department of Defense (DOD) provided information that was “incomplete, inadequate, and inconsistent with long-standing practices and procedures.”⁵ The Chair of the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee said the administration made it “more difficult” to develop DOD's FY26 appropriation.⁶ Other subcommittees reported similar problems: the Senate Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Subcommittee cited late and incomplete submissions from the Department of Commerce; the House Homeland Security Subcommittee said the administration’s “substantial delay” prevented it from incorporating many administration reforms; and the Senate Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittee criticized the administration's “utter lack of regard for complying with Congressional intent on spending funds as appropriated.”⁷

The White House’s Office of Management and Budget (OMB) compounded these problems by concealing how it was apportioning appropriations to agencies.⁸ One week after the full-year CR passed for FY2025, OMB shut down its apportionment website, cutting off access to documents showing when agencies would receive their appropriated funding. This violated statutory requirements and further limited Congress’s ability to monitor how the administration was

⁴ U.S. House Committee on Appropriations & U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations, *Letter from Ranking Member Rosa L. DeLauro and Vice Chair Patty Murray to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget regarding FY25 agency spending plan transparency* (May 27, 2025) (<https://democrats-appropriations.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/democrats-appropriations.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/250527-de-lauro-murray-fy25-omb-spend-plan-letter.pdf>); U.S. House Committee on Appropriations (Democratic Members), *Spend Plan Letters from Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Subcommittee Ranking Member Grace Meng* (2025) (<https://democrats-appropriations.house.gov/spend-plan-letters-commerce-justice-science-and-related-agencies-subcommittee-ranking-member-grace>).

⁵ U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations, *Report on Department of Defense Appropriations Bill, 2026*, page 6 (S. Rpt. 119-52) (July 31, 2025) (<https://www.congress.gov/119/crpt/srpt52/CRPT-119srpt52.pdf>).

⁶ U.S. House Committee on Appropriations, *Calvert Remarks at FY26 Defense Bill Full Committee Markup* (June 12, 2025) (<https://appropriations.house.gov/news/remarks/calvert-remarks-fy26-defense-bill-full-committee-markup>).

⁷ U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations, *Report on Departments of Commerce and Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2026*, page 72 (S. Rpt. 119-44) (July 17, 2025) (<https://www.congress.gov/119/crpt/srpt44/CRPT-119srpt44.pdf>); U.S. House Committee on Appropriations, *Report on Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Bill, 2026*, page 4 (H. Rpt. 119-173) (November 6, 2025) (<https://www.congress.gov/119/crpt/hrpt173/CRPT-119hrpt173.pdf>); U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations, *Report on Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2026*, page 16 (S. Rpt. 119-46) (July 24, 2025) (<https://www.congress.gov/119/crpt/srpt46/CRPT-119srpt46.pdf>).

⁸ Congressional Research Service, *Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Reporting on Apportionments* (August 21, 2025) (<https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IN12538>).

implementing the full-year CR.⁹ The blackout lasted until mid-August, ending only after a court order forced OMB to restore the site.¹⁰

The restored documents showed that OMB had used the apportionment process to tighten the White House’s control over agency spending.¹¹ In multiple cases, the documents showed OMB delaying apportioning funding to agencies. In other cases, OMB designated hundreds of millions of dollars of funding as “unallocated,” making the funds unavailable to agencies. OMB also conditioned appropriations on agencies submitting additional plans detailing how their spending “aligns with [the] Administration[’s] priorities.” OMB has not released these plans, and the full extent of its withholding remains unknown.¹² For more detail, see Co-Equal’s separate report on OMB’s apportionment process.¹³

These actions have undermined the foundation of Congress’s appropriations power. Without reliable information, Congress cannot track how agencies used their past appropriations or determine their true funding needs for the upcoming year.

⁹ U.S. Congress, *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023*, Division E, Title II, Sec. 204 (Public Law 117–328) (<https://www.congress.gov/117/plaws/publ328/PLAW-117publ328.pdf>). See also, Co-Equal, *The Apportionment Process: Its Uses and Abuses* (July 2025)

(https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/5cd036eb776bf651fcf12ee9/69710a29ba5a9b14c5ce8af2_The%20Apportionment%20Process%20-%20Its%20Uses%20and%20Abuses.pdf).

¹⁰ Federal News Network, *OMB Restores Public Spending Database After Losing Court Cases* (August 19, 2025) (<https://federalnewsnetwork.com/budget/2025/08/omb-restores-public-spending-database-after-losing-court-cases/>).

¹¹ 31 U.S.C. 1513(a) ([https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=\(title:31%20section:1513%20edition:prelim\)](https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=(title:31%20section:1513%20edition:prelim))).

¹² Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, *Trump Administration Abused Spending Safeguards to Advance Its Agenda — and Illegally Hid Its Actions* (September 5, 2025) (<https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-budget/trump-administration-abused-spending-safeguards-to-advance-its-agenda-and>).

¹³ Co-Equal, *The Apportionment Process: Its Uses and Abuses* (July 2025)

(https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/5cd036eb776bf651fcf12ee9/69710a29ba5a9b14c5ce8af2_The%20Apportionment%20Process%20-%20Its%20Uses%20and%20Abuses.pdf).