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House Appropriations Bills for 2024 Cut a Swath Through Crucial Programs, Deviate Sharply From Agreed Levels

By David Reich

The fiscal year 2024 appropriations bills approved by the House Appropriations Committee make major cuts in a wide range of domestic priorities. Among those hardest hit are programs crucial to the well-being of families with low incomes and their children, to public health, to job training and protection of workers' rights, to a clean environment, and to fair administration of tax laws. The House bills are highly partisan and deviate sharply from the levels set in the bipartisan agreement to raise the federal debt limit in May.

In contrast, the Senate-passed appropriations bills are lean but include substantially fewer cuts and rescissions (which take back already enacted funding), are largely consistent with agreed-on levels, and have strong bipartisan support. They offer a better path toward funding that meets national needs, although there are some programmatic areas where the Senate levels are too low to meet those needs, such as with WIC (the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children) and housing assistance.

As part of the debt limit deal, the House, Senate, and Biden Administration agreed on defense and non-defense appropriations totals for 2024, calling for regular 2024 non-defense appropriations to be held to the same dollar total as in 2023. Reaching the 2023 non-defense level in 2024 requires not only setting appropriations at the cap established in the debt limit legislation but also adhering to the agreements negotiators had signed off on that provide offsets to accommodate additional funding. Such a freeze at last year's level is fairly austere. It requires any increases that are necessary to meet rising costs, increasing needs, or new situations to be offset by cuts in other areas.

While the Senate's 2024 appropriations bills generally adhere to that approach (with small deviations agreed to on a bipartisan basis), the House's Republican majority began writing non-defense appropriations bills with severe cuts to vital programs, at a total that is roughly \$153 billion lower than had been agreed on. In the bills drafted by the House Appropriations Committee, the House Republicans achieve those cuts in two basic ways: by reducing many 2024 appropriations by

about \$59 billion (7 percent) below the 2023 levels, and by rescinding \$94 billion of already enacted funding, almost all from the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act.¹

This report describes some of the serious cuts and shortfalls in the House appropriations bills, affecting areas such as education, child care, housing, job training, public health, medical research, nutrition assistance, environmental protection, renewable energy, enforcement of civil rights and worker protection laws, and operation of the Social Security system.² It also describes the proposed rescissions of previously enacted funding, which include amounts that had been provided to fairly enforce tax laws and make sure that wealthy individuals and corporations pay their share, and to combat climate change, promote clean energy, and assist farmers.

Children and Families, Students, Education, and Housing

The House bills shortchange the needs of pregnant people and families with young children who need help affording healthy food, of school children in low-income communities, of families needing help with child care costs or an affordable place to live, and of college students seeking financial aid.

The House bills would:

Take away food assistance from hundreds of thousands of new parents and young children by underfunding WIC. This Agriculture Department program supports millions of people in low-income families in important life stages — during and after pregnancy, and from birth until a child’s 5th birthday — by providing nutritious foods, nutrition education, referrals to health care, and other services. The House Agriculture bill’s WIC funding is well below the level needed to serve all eligible families who wish to participate, and would result in an estimated 600,000 new parents, toddlers, and preschoolers being turned away.³ The House bill would also cut WIC’s science-based fruit and vegetable benefit by between 58 and 71 percent (depending on the recipient’s age) for 4.7 million of the remaining participants.⁴

¹ For more information, see David Reich, “Partisan House Appropriations Bills Underfund Non-Defense Priorities and Are a Sharp Break From the Bipartisan Debt Ceiling Agreement,” CBPP, August 2, 2023, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-budget/partisan-house-appropriations-bills-underfund-non-defense-priorities-and>.

² The examples in this paper refer to the 2024 appropriations bills reported to the House by its Appropriations Committee (or, approved by subcommittee in the case of the Commerce-Justice-Science and Labor-Health and Human Services (HHS)-Education bills, which have not yet been considered by the full Appropriations Committee). They also include any modifications made by a resolution from the House Rules Committee (“rule”) providing for consideration of the measure. They do not include amendments made during consideration by the full House.

Amounts of cuts (or increases) refer to the funding change from 2023 to 2024. They do not include emergency funding or other funding not subject to appropriations caps (such as amounts designated for disaster assistance or wildfire suppression), except that amounts do include \$12.5 billion in 2023 emergency funding regarded as part of the base.

³ Katie Bergh and Lauren Hall, “Looming WIC Funding Shortfall Would Jeopardize Access to WIC’s Proven Benefits and Disproportionately Harm Black and Hispanic Families,” CBPP, October 26, 2023, <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/looming-wic-funding-shortfall-would-jeopardize-access-to-wics-proven-benefits-and>.

⁴ While this paper is focused on the impacts of appropriations bills reported by the House Appropriations Committee, the House also adopted two floor amendments to their Agriculture appropriations bill that would take food assistance away from more than 1 million low-income people through harmful changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance

Cut more than \$15.6 billion in funding that schools use to help students in low-income communities learn and to help students whose first language is not English. The bills:

- **Cut the Title I Education for Disadvantaged Students program by 80 percent, or \$14.7 billion.** This Education Department program is the largest federal program supporting K-12 education. It makes grants to school districts serving communities experiencing high levels of poverty to help them provide additional services and supports to students from low-income households or disadvantaged backgrounds. This cut would greatly scale back the federal government’s commitment to improving equity for low-income communities in funding education and could remove support for more than 220,000 teachers and other staff.⁵
- **Eliminate the Education Department’s English Language Acquisition Program.** These grants, funded at \$890 million in 2023, help schools meet the needs of students learning English.

Make it harder for students to afford college by eliminating some forms of help, including federal work-study funding, and by freezing Pell Grants, which provide tuition assistance.

The bills withdraw more than \$2 billion in college assistance, straining families’ budgets and making it harder for many students to go to college. The bills:

- **Eliminate the “campus-based” college student aid programs: Federal Work-Study and Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOGs).** This aid is distributed through qualifying colleges and universities to help cover unmet needs for financial assistance (through income from part-time employment in the case of work study). Work study was funded at \$1.2 billion in 2023, with an estimated 660,000 recipients; SEOGs were funded at \$910 million, with almost 1.7 million recipients.
- **Freeze the maximum Pell Grant amount while college costs continue to rise.** Pell Grants are the foundation of federal financial aid for college students of modest means, with more than 6 million undergraduate students receiving assistance. In the 2023-2024 school year, the maximum Pell Grant covered just 31 percent of the cost of attending a state university (tuition, fees, and room and board).⁶

Make it harder for families to afford child care, reduce the number of children who can participate in Head Start, and cut funding that supports state efforts to improve preschool offerings. Compared to the Senate bills, the House bills provide some \$2.0 billion *less* for three main early learning programs — child care, Head Start, and Preschool Development Grants — on top of cuts to Title I (described above), which also funds early learning. These cuts undercut support for

Program (SNAP). Dottie Rosenbaum, “House Republicans’ SNAP Amendments Would Take Food Away From More Than 1 Million Low-Income People,” CBPP, September 26, 2023, <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/house-republicans-snap-amendments-would-take-food-away-from-more-than-1-million-low-income>.

⁵ House Appropriations Committee Democratic Staff, Summary of Draft Fiscal Year 2024 Labor, HHS, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations bill for subcommittee markup, July 14, 2023, <https://democrats-appropriations.house.gov/sites/democrats.appropriations.house.gov/files/FY24%20LHHS%20Summary.pdf>.

⁶ College Board, “Trends in College Pricing and Student Aid 2023,” <https://research.collegeboard.org/media/pdf/Trends%20Report%202023.pdf>

the early learning and child care that families and children need, at a time when COVID-related funding has expired, which is also threatening the stability of many providers. The bills would:

- **Freeze appropriations for child care assistance even as pandemic-related child care funding has also expired.** These appropriations are the largest ongoing source of federal assistance to help working families with low incomes meet child care expenses, but the House bill provides no increase to help meet rising costs or aid additional families. Before the pandemic, federal child care programs were assisting only about 16 percent of eligible children, the Health and Human Services Department (HHS) estimated.⁷ Without more funding, low levels are likely to return: substantial COVID relief helped stabilize child care providers and meet more families' needs, but that funding is expiring. The Biden Administration has requested supplemental appropriations to help fill the gap in 2024, but ongoing funding is needed in this crucial area.
- **Cut Head Start by \$750 million, or 6 percent.** Head Start supports comprehensive early learning and development services for economically disadvantaged children and families. House Appropriations Committee Democrats estimate that the proposed cuts will result in more than 50,000 children losing access to Head Start programs.⁸
- **Eliminate Preschool Development Grants.** These grants, funded at \$315 million in 2023, are designed to build state and local capacity to implement preschool for 4-year-old children from low- and moderate-income families.

Cut the number of households that receive rental assistance and make it harder for households struggling with the rising cost of rent. The bills would:

- **Result in funding levels that would lead to 40,000 fewer families receiving help to afford stable homes through the Housing Choice Voucher program, we estimate.**⁹ These vouchers are the country's largest rental assistance program, helping households with low incomes afford a home of their choice in the private market. Rental assistance programs require additional funding each year because their costs are tied to rents, which rise every year and have increased greatly in recent years.
- **Cut other affordable housing resources that communities need to maintain existing affordable housing and to develop additional housing, which is badly needed to address inadequate supply.** The House bills also cut funding for other programs that help people afford quality housing. They would cut public housing by 2 percent (\$151 million), continuing a long pattern of disinvestment in this important source of affordable housing and risking the loss of affordable units to disrepair; cut by 67 percent (\$1 billion) the HOME Investment Partnerships program, which funds affordable housing development and rehabilitation; and eliminate the Choice Neighborhoods program, which helps revitalize public

⁷ Nina Chien, "Factsheet: Estimates of Child Care Eligibility & Receipt for Fiscal Year 2019," HHS, September 2022, <https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1d276a590ac166214a5415bee430d5e9/cy2019-child-care-subsidy-eligibility.pdf>.

⁸ House Appropriations Committee Democratic Staff, *op. cit.*

⁹ The bills provide a small increase above current levels but don't fully account for increased costs and so fall short of fully funding all existing vouchers. Sonya Acosta, "Final Appropriations Package Will Need Additional Funding to Avoid Rental Assistance Cuts," CBPP, October 24, 2023, <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/final-appropriations-package-will-need-additional-funding-to-avoid-rental-assistance-cuts>.

and affordable housing and the surrounding neighborhoods that have long been denied resources due to disinvestment and discriminatory housing and development policies.¹⁰

Medical Research and Health

The House bills cut back federal support for public health workers who detect disease outbreaks, vaccinate people against dangerous diseases, and promote disease prevention. They also cut back funding for medical research into better treatment and cures for diseases, as well as support for family planning clinics and care for people with HIV, among other health care needs.

The House bills would:

Reduce the nation’s preparedness for disease outbreaks and cut disease prevention efforts through an 18 percent (\$1.6 billion) cut to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

CDC tracks and responds to disease outbreaks, fosters disease prevention, and supports the work of state and local public health agencies. Examples of cuts to CDC’s budget include a 16 percent reduction in funding for prevention of HIV, viral hepatitis, sexually transmitted infections, and tuberculosis; a 21 percent cut in chronic disease prevention programs; and a 17 percent cut in public health preparedness.

Reduce the nation’s commitment to groundbreaking medical research by cutting funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) by 8 percent (\$3.8 billion). NIH is a major source of support for medical research, both conducting its own in-house research and funding the work of medical researchers throughout the country. The biggest dollar cut within this part of the legislation is a \$1.5 billion (23 percent) reduction to the NIH institute that studies infectious diseases — this following a major pandemic with severe impacts on people’s health and the nation’s economy. The legislation also includes a two-thirds cut, from \$1.5 billion to \$500 million, to ARPA-H (Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health). ARPA-H’s purpose is to undertake long-shot but potentially high-reward projects not readily accomplished through traditional federal biomedical research, including participation in the Cancer Moonshot initiative seeking a cure for that disease.

Make it harder for people to access family planning services by eliminating funding for Title X grants to public and private nonprofit agencies that support family planning services for people with modest incomes. In 2021, this program provided contraceptive, infertility, and other family planning services to more than 1.6 million clients at more than 3,200 sites nationwide. Established 53 years ago, Title X received appropriations totaling \$286 million in 2023. Fees are charged on a sliding scale based on clients’ ability to pay.

Cut care to people with HIV by reducing the Ryan White HIV/AIDS program by 9 percent (\$239 million). This HHS program provides funding to state and local governments and local clinics and organizations to deliver care, treatment, and support to low-income people with HIV.

¹⁰ Richard Rothstein, “Race and Public Housing: Revisiting the Federal Role,” Economic Policy Institute, December 17, 2012, <https://www.epi.org/publication/race-public-housing-revisiting-federal-role/>.

Workers and Jobs

The House bills sharply scale back funding for job training for people seeking to learn new skills and boost their employment prospects. They also make big cuts to agencies that protect workers' rights, including rights to minimum wages and overtime pay, to safe workplaces, and to engage in union activity.

The House bills would:

Eliminate federal job training funding for adults and youth provided through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, a major source of job training funding. These programs received \$1.8 billion in 2023, which is expected to support training for more than 420,000 adults and youth.

Leave workers less protected against illegal employer behavior by cutting efforts to enforce the right to unionize and basic health and safety standards. The bills would:

- **Cut appropriations for the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) by 33 percent (\$99 million).** NLRB enforces federal law protecting the rights of workers to form unions and engage in union activity; it does so by investigating and adjudicating complaints about violations and conducting elections to determine if workers wish to be represented by a union.
- **Cut appropriations for the Labor Department's Wage and Hour Division by 29 percent (\$75 million).** This agency ensures adherence to minimum wage, overtime, child labor, and family and medical leave laws, among others.
- **Cut appropriations for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) by 15 percent (\$95 million) and the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) by 16 percent (\$63 million).** Both agencies seek to prevent workplace injuries and illnesses by setting and enforcing standards and providing training and assistance.
- **Cut appropriations for the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) by 32 percent (\$115 million).** NIOSH studies occupational illnesses and injuries and ways to prevent them, including research and education on health and safety in disaster response. NIOSH is located within CDC, intentionally separate from the enforcement agencies to foster independence in research.

Environment, Climate, and Rural Communities

The House bills make big cuts to environmental protection, including enforcement of environmental laws, programs to clean up pollution, and investments in safe drinking water, wastewater treatment, and other infrastructure. The House bills also make big cuts and rescissions to programs that promote clean energy and otherwise address climate change.

The House bills would:

Leave communities and people more vulnerable to water and air pollution, unsafe drinking water, toxic wastes, hazardous chemicals, and other threats to human health by cutting funding for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) by 39 percent (\$4.0 billion). This cut would bring EPA funding to the lowest level since 1991, *before* adjusting for inflation. Cuts

include 26 percent in Environmental Programs and Management (which funds activities such as development and enforcement of environmental protection rules and standards), 30 percent in Science and Technology (which performs scientific research and laboratory analysis to inform EPA's work), and 42 percent in State and Tribal Assistance Grants (which include funding for wastewater treatment and drinking water facilities, water pollution control, and other environmental grant programs).

Take less care of our national parks with a 13 percent (\$436 million) cut to the National Park Service budget. This includes a 9 percent cut in funds for operating the national parks and a 52 percent cut in the national parks construction budget.

Reduce efforts to facilitate our transition to clean energy by cutting funding for the Energy Department's Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy programs by 42 percent (\$1.5 billion).¹¹ This appropriations account supports research, development, demonstration, and deployment of technologies to enable transition to a net-zero greenhouse gas emissions economy. It gives special attention to the needs of workers and communities impacted by the energy transition and to those historically overburdened by pollution, who are disproportionately people of color due to policies like redlining that promoted exposure to industrial areas.

Shred multi-year efforts to promote clean energy and combat climate change by rescinding more than \$29 billion in multi-year funding that had been provided in the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act to further those goals. The House bills would cut:

- **\$18.9 billion from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund**, which makes grants to facilitate access to financing and technical assistance to support deployment of clean energy technologies, especially in low-income and disadvantaged communities.
- **\$4.4 billion from High-Efficiency Electric Home Rebates**, which assist low- and moderate-income consumers in upgrading to high-efficiency electric systems and appliances.
- **\$3.2 billion from programs to convert federal buildings into high-performance green buildings.**
- **\$1.4 billion from Environmental and Climate Justice Grants** for environmental justice initiatives in disadvantaged communities, such as pollution prevention and remediation, investment in low- and zero-emission technologies, and climate resiliency and adaptation.
- **\$990 million from funding to encourage states and localities to adopt the latest building codes for energy efficiency.**
- **\$190 million from grants to states to train contractors in installation of home energy efficiency improvements.**

Scale back assistance to farmers and rural communities by rescinding approximately \$5.8 billion in multi-year funding that had been provided in the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act for those purposes. Included in the House bills' cuts:

¹¹ The bill approved by the House Appropriations Committee cut this account by 13 percent. The resolution from the House Rules Committee ("rule") providing for consideration of the measure by the full House added an additional cut of \$1 billion, bringing the total cut to 42 percent.

- **Approximately¹² \$2.3 billion from Assistance to Underserved Farmers, Ranchers, and Foresters**, which provides support to veterans and members of groups historically subjected to racial, ethnic, and gender discrimination, to help ensure that they can participate in Agriculture Department programs without facing discrimination or other barriers.
- **Approximately \$2 billion from Farm Loan Immediate Relief for Borrowers With At-Risk Agricultural Operations**, which provides loans, loan modifications, or other financial assistance to farmers who have Agriculture Department direct and guaranteed loans and whose operations are at financial risk.
- **\$1 billion from assistance for rural electric cooperatives**. This assistance helps improve the long-term resiliency, reliability, and affordability of rural electric systems by supporting deployment of renewable energy, zero-emissions, and carbon capture systems and by making energy efficiency improvements to generation and transmission systems.
- **\$500 million from the Rural Energy for America Program**, which provides financial and technical assistance to aid farmers, ranchers, rural small businesses, and distressed communities in purchasing and installing renewable energy systems and in making energy efficiency improvements.

Transportation

The House bills make several cuts to transportation infrastructure, including funding for mass transit improvement projects, support for Amtrak, and grants to improve freight rail safety and reliability.

The House bills would:

Let bus, subway, and passenger rail service deteriorate by slashing federal support:

- **Cut mass transit capital investment grants by 85 percent (\$2.2 billion)**. These competitive grants support large- and small-scale construction and expansion of rail, bus, rapid transit, and ferry systems.
- **Cut support for Amtrak by 65 percent (\$1.6 billion)**. This funding goes to both capital and operating support in the Northeast Corridor and throughout the national rail network.

Do less to upgrade transportation infrastructure, including railroad safety:

- **Eliminate the Transportation Department's National Infrastructure Investment program**, which received \$800 million in 2023. This program makes competitive grants for large-scale highway, transit, and rail projects likely to generate regional or national benefits.
- **Cut the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement program by 52 percent (\$276 million)**. This program makes competitive grants to support freight and intercity passenger rail projects to improve safety, efficiency, and reliability.

¹² This (along with the number in the next item) is approximate because the bill in question calls for rescinding all unobligated balances. The numbers cited are the Congressional Budget Office estimates of the amount that would be rescinded.

Basic Government Functions

The House bills worsen the underfunding of agencies that directly serve the public in critical ways, including the IRS and the Social Security Administration (SSA), leading to longer waits to get questions answered or for decisions about benefits. This will also continue to leave the IRS short of the staffing and expertise it needs to audit complex tax returns and make sure that corporations and wealthy people are paying their fair share — reversing an agency rebuilding process that is already seeing improvements in customer service and in revenue collected in the face of tax avoidance by some wealthy taxpayers.¹³

The House bills would:

Gut efforts to improve customer service at the IRS and ensure that high-income households and corporations pay the taxes they legally owe by rescinding the vast majority of the multi-year funding provided for the long-term rebuilding of IRS capacity to enforce tax laws and serve taxpayers, while also cutting regular annual IRS funding by 9 percent (\$1.1 billion).¹⁴ The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 provided multi-year funding to counteract long-term underfunding that left the IRS with greatly diminished capacity to reduce tax cheating by properly auditing complex tax returns of wealthy taxpayers, or to respond to ordinary taxpayers' questions. But of the \$80 billion in ten-year funding that law provided, the House bills rescind \$67 billion, devastating the rebuilding effort. The House bills compound this problem by cutting the regular annual IRS appropriation by \$1.1 billion (or 9 percent), thus further reducing IRS capacity instead of rebuilding it.

Further erode customer service at the SSA by cutting the agency's customer service budget by 2 percent (\$250 million), when funding increases are needed to boost staffing and invest in IT as the number of beneficiaries grows. The House bills' cuts would come on top of more than a decade of cuts that have forced the agency to face serving millions more beneficiaries at its lowest staffing level in over 25 years. Between 2010 and 2023, customer service funding¹⁵ at the SSA fell by 17 percent (adjusted for inflation), and the number of staff fell by 16 percent, while the number of beneficiaries rose by 22 percent. Wait times for disability decisions are at a record high, and hold times on the phone are now around 40 minutes.¹⁶ Flat funding under the current continuing resolution has led to a hiring freeze and suspension of IT investments.

Undermine enforcement of civil rights laws that ensure people can access public services without facing unlawful discrimination. The House bills cut funding for agency Offices of Civil Rights, which enforce civil rights requirements related to their agency's mission and programs. Cuts

¹³ Chuck Marr and Samantha Jacoby, "Bipartisan Senate Action Passes Minimal Test for IRS Funding While Multiple House Republican Bills Fail," CBPP, July 20, 2023, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-budget/bipartisan-senate-action-passes-minimal-test-for-irs-funding-while-multiple>.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ All funding except fee-funded items and special appropriations for program integrity.

¹⁶ Kathleen Romig, "Social Security Administration Needs Additional Funding to Avoid Exacerbating Customer Service Crisis," CBPP, September 22, 2023, <https://www.cbpp.org/blog/social-security-administration-needs-additional-funding-to-avoid-exacerbating-customer-service>.

include 39 percent at the Agriculture Department, 25 percent at the Education Department, and 20 percent at HHS.

Problematic, Controversial Riders

The bills produced by the House majority are also replete with partisan legislative provisions or “riders,” mostly pursuing what have become common targets of Republican culture wars.

Examples of such riders include provisions in multiple bills that would stymie racial equity initiatives, such as prohibiting the use of funds to carry out the President’s executive orders on diversity, equity, and inclusion or for agency offices dedicated to furthering those goals, and prohibiting the use of funds to promote or advance critical race theory.

Other riders include anti-LGBTQ policies that would prohibit the use of funds for surgical procedures or hormone therapy for purposes of gender-affirming care, prohibit implementation of an executive order on combatting discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation, and prohibit flying LGBTQ pride flags at federal facilities.

The Republican bills also seek to further restrict abortion rights, including by overturning a decision by the Food and Drug Administration that facilitates access to the medication abortion drug mifepristone; blocking a Defense Department policy to cover travel costs of service members and members of their families to obtain abortions if they are stationed in states restricting abortion services; prohibiting clinics affiliated with Planned Parenthood from receiving funds appropriated in the Labor-HHS-Education bill unless they stop performing legally permissible abortions; and blocking the use of funds in the bills to implement two executive orders related to access to reproductive health care services.