
Spending Bill Rightly Prioritizes Vital WIC and Housing Voucher Funding; Rejects Calls for Deeper Cuts

Statement of Sharon Parrott, CBPP President, on first “minibus” spending bill and other legislative priorities needing congressional action:

The “minibus” spending bill released yesterday reflects that non-defense funding levels set by last May’s bipartisan debt ceiling deal are extremely tight and require tough choices and prioritization. It’s critical that calls by some congressional Republicans for deeper cuts were rejected.

Importantly, the bill fully funds the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) so that no pregnant or postpartum adults or young children would be turned away from the food assistance they need and maintains WIC’s science-based fruit and vegetable benefit, rejecting House Republican proposals to cut it.

The bill also increases funding for Housing Choice Vouchers enough to avoid a significant cut in the number of families receiving federal rental assistance, important since only 1 in 4 eligible households currently receive assistance due to funding limitations.

When Congress finalizes this legislation, it should turn to two important outstanding items: the second spending bill and the tax bill that passed the House with overwhelming bipartisan support. How it resolves appropriations and the tax bill is critical.

First, appropriations. With tight funding caps, Congress should prioritize investments that help families make ends meet and open doors to opportunity, like child care, Head Start, energy assistance, and education in the second funding bill.

Congress also should adequately fund the IRS to continue its efforts to improve customer service and ensure wealthy taxpayers and corporations pay the taxes they legally owe. Failing to adequately fund the IRS drains revenues and encourages law-breaking.

And it should provide adequate funding for the Social Security Administration so seniors and others who receive Social Security and Supplemental Security Income get the customer service they deserve.

Second, the tax bill needs to get done. The bipartisan bill got 357 votes in the House. It couples a Child Tax Credit expansion with a set of business tax breaks and is paid for by ending a pandemic tax break that’s been subject to abuse.

The Child Tax Credit expansion helps 16 million children in families with low earnings, lifts 500,000 children above the poverty line, and is paid for. A mom who has two children and earns \$18,000 working as a home health worker will gain \$1,275 under the bill this year. The Senate should pass it.

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