
Funding Agreement Preserves Reasonable Funding Levels; IRS Funding Rescissions Are Harmful

Statement of Sharon Parrott, CBPP President, on congressional leaders' agreement on a topline funding level for 2024:

Congressional leaders' new agreement on a topline funding level for 2024 rightly ensures that overall funding available for non-defense programs will stay at \$773 billion, the already tight level set in May's bipartisan debt ceiling agreement.

This level is at best a funding freeze at a time when costs have risen, meaning that public services that people and communities count on will be cut. Given that reality, it was critical to reject further, deeper cuts that some House Republicans demanded. The agreement does so and should unstick the needlessly delayed appropriations process and avoid a shutdown. If House Republicans pursue ideological riders, that could create further delays and undermine the agreement. These long delays in funding decisions are harmful — they hamper federal agencies' ability to deliver public services efficiently and effectively as they wait for final decisions.

It is deeply unfortunate that House Republicans demanded that \$10 billion in already agreed-upon funding cuts to the IRS slated for 2025 be accelerated to 2024, again putting tax cheaters' interests ahead of honest taxpayers. Any further cuts to the IRS should be rejected.

House Republicans continue to create showdowns they claim are about spending and deficits, only to demand IRS funding cuts that would weaken tax enforcement, allow for more unlawful tax cheating, and increase the deficit. This counterproductive demand is a key reason that Congress's work to fund the government is so far behind schedule.

While details about the agreement's rescission of \$6.1 billion in COVID-related funding remain scant, they reflect a tiny share of government spending and were no reason to hold up the budget process for months.

Congress now needs to move ahead — quickly — to reach agreement on how the overall non-defense funding will be divided up, first by appropriation bill and then by program area. With constrained non-defense funding levels, policymakers need to focus on the highest priorities.

At the top of that list should be maintain Congress's 25-year commitment to full funding for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) so that no pregnant and postpartum adults or young children get turned away from the food assistance they need. It is simply unacceptable for members of Congress of either party to consider taking food

assistance away that is proven to improve birth outcomes, the health of pregnant and postpartum recipients, and the well-being of our youngest children.

Similarly, other program areas that help families struggle to afford the basics — such as housing assistance, emergency food assistance, and child care — must be prioritized in a year when funding levels are so tight.

Last year started with irresponsible brinkmanship over the absurd question of whether we will pay our bills. It ended with another manufactured showdown when House Republicans insisted on renegotiating the May debt ceiling agreement, delaying Congress's basic work of producing funding bills.

It is long past time to move forward, avert a shutdown, and craft responsible funding legislation that meets the nation's most pressing needs.

#

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization and policy institute that conducts research and analysis on a range of government policies and programs. It is supported primarily by foundation grants.