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The Congressional Budget Process Timeline

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The Congressional Budget Process Timeline

The Constitution grants Congress power over federal spending, revenues, and borrowing. While the Constitution establishes the legislative branch as having this authority, it does not specify how, when, and in what order Congress should exercise it. As a result, Congress has created a budget process over time to define how it develops and considers budgetary measures for each federal fiscal year beginning on October 1. The timing, sequence, and occurrence of the actions and decisions that make up the congressional budget process may differ for each fiscal year. Target dates and timetables established in law are intended to guide the timing and sequence of certain aspects of the process, however.

The Congressional Budget Act of 1974 (the Budget Act) created a timetable that provides a framework for the intended timing and sequence of the congressional budget process for each fiscal year. It established a series of target and enabling dates for the consideration and adoption or enactment of budgetary measures prior to the start of each fiscal year. The timetable outlined in the Budget Act is useful for understanding the intended timing and sequence of the congressional budget process. In practice, however, there is no timeline that can predict with certainty how the process will unfold each year.

The annual submission of the President’s budget to Congress serves as a statement of Administration policy and priorities and is typically seen as the beginning of the congressional budget process for the upcoming fiscal year. The President is required by law to submit a budget request for the upcoming fiscal year by the first Monday in February, but the submission often occurs after this date.

The Budget Act provides for the adoption of a budget resolution that serves as an agreement between the House and Senate on a congressional budgetary plan for the upcoming fiscal year. In years when Congress has adopted a budget resolution, it has most often been in the spring or summer, though it has sometimes been later. In some recent years, for example, Congress adopted a budget resolution after the beginning of the initial fiscal year for which it applied. In years when Congress has not adopted a budget resolution, the House and/or Senate has often employed alternative legislative tools (known as “deeming resolutions”) to establish enforceable budgetary levels at some point during the budget process.

The reconciliation process is an optional process that is triggered by the adoption of a budget resolution containing provisions known as reconciliation directives. This process allows Congress to develop and consider certain budgetary legislation using expedited procedures. Reconciliation generally follows a timeline set forth in the budget resolution, and therefore its timing and duration have varied historically. Congress has passed reconciliation legislation at various times during the calendar year, including both before and after the beginning of the initial fiscal year for which the budget resolution applied.

The appropriations process refers to the development and consideration of appropriations legislation for each fiscal year, including the 12 regular appropriations bills that provide annual funding for most federal agencies. This process typically begins shortly after the submission of the President’s budget and, in recent decades, has continued into the new fiscal year.

It has been common in recent practice for Congress to enact one or more continuing appropriations measures (known as “continuing resolutions” or CRs) to provide temporary funding for agencies if some or all of the regular appropriations bills have not been enacted by the beginning of the fiscal year on October 1. Congress has typically enacted an initial CR in late September that provides budget authority for the first weeks or months of the new fiscal year and then enacted additional CRs to extend this funding as needed.

For most fiscal years, Congress has completed the appropriations process by enacting the 12 regular appropriations acts either separately or as part of consolidated appropriations measures (often referred to as “omnibus” or “minibus” appropriations acts). On occasion, Congress has completed the process by enacting a CR covering some or all of the regular appropriations acts through the end of the fiscal year (often referred to as a “full-year CR”). In recent decades, most regular appropriations bills have not been enacted prior to the start of the fiscal year. As a result, since FY1998, the process has been completed at some point after the start of the fiscal year for which appropriations legislation was being considered. Over this period, the process was completed between October and May but most often in December or March.

Contents

Introduction.....	1
The Congressional Budget Act of 1974	1
Submission of the President’s Budget to Congress.....	4
Adoption of a Budget Resolution.....	4
Reconciliation Legislation	6
Development and Consideration of Appropriations Bills	9
Regular Appropriations Bills	10
Continuing Resolutions.....	12
Final Enactment of Regular Appropriations	13

Figures

Figure 1. Timing of Budget Resolution Adoption and Enactment (or Veto) of Reconciliation Legislation.....	8
Figure 2. Aggregate Duration of Short-Term Continuing Resolutions and Funding Gaps	13

Tables

Table 1. Congressional Budget Act Timetable	2
Table 2. Budget Act Points of Order Related to the Timing and Sequence of the Congressional Budget Process	2
Table 3. Date of Final Adoption of the Budget Resolution	5

Contacts

Author Information.....	14
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Introduction

Article I of the U.S. Constitution grants Congress the power of the purse, establishing the House and Senate as having control over federal spending, revenue, and borrowing decisions.¹ The Constitution, however, does not specify how, when, and in what order Congress should make federal budgetary decisions. As a result, Congress has created a budget process over time through a patchwork of statutes, rules, practices, and precedents that, together, are intended to define how Congress exercises its power of the purse.

The congressional budget process generally refers to congressional development and consideration of budgetary measures for a given federal fiscal year running from October 1 through September 30 of the following calendar year. This process typically involves actions and decisions on a range of measures directly or indirectly affecting federal spending, revenues, and/or borrowing. The timing, sequence, and occurrence of the actions and decisions that make up the congressional budget process may differ to various degrees for each fiscal year. Target dates and timetables established in law are intended to guide the timing and sequence of certain aspects of the process, however.

This report provides an overview of the timing and sequence of the regular, annual actions and decisions that are a part of the congressional budget process. First, it outlines the timetable for the process set forth in the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 (the Budget Act). Next, it provides information on the timing and sequence of major steps in the process in recent practice. The major actions in the congressional budget process that this report covers include the submission of the President's budget to Congress, adoption of the budget resolution, potential development and consideration of reconciliation legislation, and the development and consideration of appropriations legislation. This report does not cover budgetary measures that are not developed and considered on any regular or annual timeline but may be part of congressional budgetary decisionmaking in a given year, such as legislation related to the debt limit, certain legislation related to mandatory (or direct) spending or revenues, and legislation authorizing appropriations.²

The Congressional Budget Act of 1974

The Budget Act established a process intended to coordinate the budgetary decisions Congress makes on an annual basis.³ The act created the budget resolution to serve as an agreement between the House and the Senate on a high-level budgetary plan for the upcoming fiscal year, the budget reconciliation process to provide for the expedited consideration of certain budgetary legislation, and several rules related to the development and consideration of appropriations legislation and other budgetary measures.⁴

¹ Article I, Section 8, Clause 1, of the Constitution grants Congress power over federal revenues, stating, "The Congress shall have Power To lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts, and Excises." Article I, Section 8, Clause 2, grants Congress power over federal borrowing, stating that Congress shall have power "To borrow Money on the credit of the United States." Article I, Section 9, Clause 7, grants Congress power over federal spending, stating, "No Money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in Consequence of Appropriations made by Law." For more on the powers granted to Congress in Article I of the U.S. Constitution, see the *Constitution of the United States of America: Analysis and Interpretation* ("Constitution Annotated") at <https://constitution.congress.gov/browse/article-1/>.

² For more on the federal budget process, including these topics, see CRS Report R46240, *Introduction to the Federal Budget Process*, by James V. Saturno and CRS Report WMR10007, *CRS Guide to the Federal Budget Process*, by Drew C. Aherne et al.

³ The Congressional Budget Act of 1974, Titles I-IX of P.L. 93-344, codified as amended at 2 U.S.C. §§601-688.

⁴ For more on the budget resolution, see CRS Report R48284, *The Congressional Budget Resolution: Frequently Asked* (continued...)

Section 300 of the Budget Act created a timetable intended to organize the timing and sequence of the key steps in the process. This timetable provides a series of target and enabling dates for the consideration and adoption or enactment of budgetary measures prior to the start of each fiscal year on October 1 (as seen in **Table 1**).

Table 1. Congressional Budget Act Timetable

On or before:	Action to be completed:
First Monday in February	President submits budget.
February 15	Congressional Budget Office submits report (on the economic and budget outlook) to Budget Committees.
Not later than 6 weeks after President submits budget	Committees submit views and estimates to Budget Committees.
April 1	Senate Budget Committee reports concurrent resolution on the budget (budget resolution).
April 15	Congress completes action on budget resolution.
May 15	Annual appropriation bills may be considered in the House.
June 10	House Appropriations Committee reports last annual appropriation bill.
June 15	Congress completes action on reconciliation legislation.
June 30	House completes action on annual appropriation bills.
October 1	Fiscal year begins.

Source: Section 300 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, codified as amended at 2 U.S.C. §631.

Several aspects of the budget process created by the Budget Act can be enforced through points of order during the consideration of budgetary measures in the House and Senate.⁵ This includes certain points of order related to the timing and sequence of the consideration of such measures (as seen in **Table 2**).

Table 2. Budget Act Points of Order Related to the Timing and Sequence of the Congressional Budget Process

Budget Act Section	Point of Order
302(c)	Prohibits the consideration of any measure within the jurisdiction of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees that provides new budget authority for a fiscal year until the committee makes the suballocation required by Section 302(b).

Questions, by Tori Gorman. For more on the reconciliation process, see CRS Report R48444, *The Reconciliation Process: Frequently Asked Questions*, by Tori Gorman. For more on the appropriations process, see CRS Report R47106, *The Appropriations Process: A Brief Overview*, by James V. Saturno and Megan S. Lynch.

⁵ For more on points of order in the congressional budget process, see CRS Report R47413, *Points of Order in the Congressional Budget Process*, by James V. Saturno and Megan S. Lynch. For more on points of order in the House, see CRS Report 98-307, *Points of Order, Rulings, and Appeals in the House of Representatives*, by Valerie Heitshusen. For more on points of order in the Senate, see CRS Report 98-306, *Points of Order, Rulings, and Appeals in the Senate*, by Valerie Heitshusen.

Budget Act Section	Point of Order
303(a)	Prohibits the consideration of legislation providing new budget authority, an increase or decrease in revenues, an increase or decrease in the public debt limit, new entitlement authority (in the Senate only), or an increase or decrease in outlays (in the Senate only) for a fiscal year until a budget resolution for that fiscal year has been agreed to. ^a
303(c)	In the Senate, prohibits the consideration of any appropriations measure until a concurrent resolution for that fiscal year has been agreed to and an allocation has been made to the Committee on Appropriations under Section 302(a). ^b
309	In the House, prohibits the consideration of an adjournment resolution for more than three calendar days during July until the House has approved all regular appropriations bills for the upcoming fiscal year.
310(f)	In the House, prohibits the consideration of an adjournment resolution of more than three calendar days during July until the House has completed action on any required reconciliation legislation.

Source: CRS Report R47413, *Points of Order in the Congressional Budget Process*, by James V. Saturno and Megan S. Lynch.

Notes:

- a. This point of order can be waived in the Senate with a simple majority vote. Section 302(g) of the Budget Act (known as the Pay-As-You-Go exception) provides that, after April 15, Section 303(a) shall not apply in the House to legislation (bill, joint resolution, amendment, or conference report) if, for each fiscal year covered by the most recently adopted budget resolution, such legislation would not increase the deficit if added to other changes in revenues or direct spending provided in the budget resolution pursuant to pay-as-you-go procedures included under Section 301(b)(8). Section 303(b) of the Budget Act establishes exceptions and prohibitions under Section 303(a). In the House, the point of order does not apply to advance discretionary new budget authority that first becomes available for the first or second fiscal year after the first fiscal year covered in the budget resolution, revenue legislation that is to first become effective after the first fiscal year covered in a budget resolution, general appropriations bills after May 15, or any bill or joint resolution unless it is reported by a committee. In the Senate, the point of order does not apply to advance appropriations for the first or second fiscal year after the first fiscal year covered in a budget resolution.
- b. This point of order can be waived in the Senate with a simple majority vote.

The timetable established in Section 300 of the Budget Act provides a framework for the intended timing and sequence of the congressional budget process. Most of the actions and decisions outlined in this timetable typically occur for each fiscal year, and the target dates established for each may be generally indicative of the timing of certain actions in a given year. Further, certain steps in the process are designed to be related to or required for later steps in the process. This generally provides some predictability from year to year in terms of the sequence of certain steps in the process.

In practice, however, no timeline can predict with absolute certainty how the congressional budget process will unfold for each fiscal year. The timing, sequence, and occurrence of the actions that make up the process may be influenced by various logistical, political, economic, and other factors each year. As a consequence, for any given fiscal year, some steps in the process may occur after the target date for that action established in the Budget Act, while others may not occur at all.

Most of the target and enabling dates established in Section 300 of the Budget Act are not enforceable, meaning there are no legal or procedural consequences for missing such targets. Furthermore, Budget Act points of order intended to enforce the timing and sequence of certain steps in the congressional budget process are not self-enforcing. This means that any enforcement of such rules requires that a Member raise a point of order during floor consideration of

applicable measures in their chamber. Both the House and the Senate also have procedures for waiving Budget Act points of order. In the Senate, most Budget Act points of order can be waived with the affirmative vote of three-fifths of Senators duly chosen and sworn. In the House, such points of order can be waived through the adoption of a special rule reported by the House Rules Committee, by considering a measure under suspension of the rules, or by unanimous consent.

Submission of the President's Budget to Congress

The Budget and Accounting Act of 1921 established a requirement for the President to submit a consolidated budget request for the upcoming fiscal year near the beginning of each calendar year.⁶ The President's budget submission serves as a statement of Administration policy priorities as well as a detailed plan for the allocation of budgetary resources and execution of government activities. Under current law, the President must submit a budget to Congress no later than the first Monday in February, although the submission is often delayed until after this date for various reasons. The submission of the President's budget generally signifies the beginning of congressional consideration of budgetary questions concerning the upcoming fiscal year.

CRS Report R47019, *The Executive Budget Process: An Overview* includes discussion on the historical timing and practice of the President's budget submission to Congress, stating in part

Under current law, the President must develop and submit a consolidated budget to Congress no later than the first Monday in February prior to the start of the upcoming fiscal year. In practice, the President sometimes does not meet this submission deadline, particularly during transition years. In advance of a late budget submission during a transition year, the President may submit a preliminary "skinny budget." The form and content of skinny budgets vary from Administration to Administration, but they typically present high-level proposed budget data, often aggregated to the agency or department level.

There is no statutorily established consequence for missing the submission deadline; however, a late submission could delay other aspects of the budget process.⁷

Adoption of a Budget Resolution

The Budget Act provides for the adoption of a concurrent resolution on the budget (the budget resolution) for each fiscal year.⁸ The budget resolution allows Congress to establish a framework within which the House and Senate will consider budgetary legislation, set enforceable spending and revenue levels, outline high-level spending priorities, and, optionally, include instructions that can trigger subsequent reconciliation legislation. In the context of the congressional budget process timeline, the budget resolution can be an important enabling mechanism for later steps in the process.⁹ Under the Budget Act, Congress is generally prohibited from considering budgetary measures before the adoption of a budget resolution, although the Budget Act does provide an

⁶ Public Law 13, 67th Congress, codified in part at 31 U.S.C. §501.

⁷ CRS Report R47019, *The Executive Budget Process: An Overview*, by Dominick A. Fiorentino and Taylor N. Riccard.

⁸ Section 301 of the Budget Act, codified as amended at 2 U.S.C. §632. The Budget Act requires that the budget resolution cover the budget year and at least the subsequent four fiscal years. In current practice, it has been common for the budget resolution to cover 10 total fiscal years (the budget year and the subsequent nine fiscal years).

⁹ Adoption of the same budget resolution by both chambers is required to trigger enforcement and reconciliation procedures under the Budget Act.

exception for the House to begin considering appropriations bills in the absence of one after May 15.¹⁰

Table 3. Date of Final Adoption of the Budget Resolution
FY1976-FY2025

Fiscal Year	Budget Resolution	Date of Final Adoption	Fiscal Year	Budget Resolution	Date of Final Adoption
1976	H.Con.Res. 218	05-14-1975	2001	H.Con.Res. 290	04-13-2000
1977	S.Con.Res. 109	05-13-1976	2002	H.Con.Res. 83	05-10-2001
1978	S.Con.Res. 19	05-17-1977	2003	—	—
1979	S.Con.Res. 80	05-17-1978	2004	H.Con.Res. 95	04-11-2003
1980	H.Con.Res. 107	05-24-1979	2005	None	—
1981	H.Con.Res. 307	06-12-1980	2006	H.Con.Res. 95	04-28-2005
1982	H.Con.Res. 115	05-21-1981	2007	None	—
1983	S.Con.Res. 92	06-23-1982	2008	S.Con.Res. 21	05-17-2007
1984	H.Con.Res. 91	06-23-1983	2009	S.Con.Res. 70	06-05-2008
1985	H.Con.Res. 280	10-01-1984	2010	S.Con.Res. 13	04-29-2009
1986	S.Con.Res. 32	08-01-1985	2011	—	—
1987	S.Con.Res. 120	06-27-1987	2012	—	—
1988	H.Con.Res. 93	06-24-1987	2013	—	—
1989	H.Con.Res. 268	06-06-1988	2014	—	—
1990	H.Con.Res. 106	05-18-1989	2015	—	—
1991	H.Con.Res. 310	10-09-1990	2016	S.Con.Res. 11	05-05-2015
1992	H.Con.Res. 121	05-22-1991	2017	S.Con.Res. 3	01-13-2017
1993	H.Con.Res. 287	05-21-1992	2018	H.Con.Res. 71	10-26-2017
1994	H.Con.Res. 64	04-01-1993	2019	—	—
1995	H.Con.Res. 218	05-12-1994	2020	—	—
1996	H.Con.Res. 67	06-29-1995	2021	S.Con.Res. 5	02-05-2021
1997	H.Con.Res. 178	06-13-1996	2022	S.Con.Res. 14	08-24-2021
1998	H.Con.Res. 84	06-05-1997	2023	—	—
1999	—	—	2024	—	—
2000	H.Con.Res. 68	04-15-1999	2025	H.Con.Res. 14	04-10-2025

Source: Congress.gov and the CRS Appropriations Status Table, available at <https://www.crs.gov/AppropriationsStatusTable/Index>.

Notes: This table provides information on the first budget resolution adopted for each fiscal year since FY1976. Originally, the Budget Act provided for the annual adoption of two budget resolutions for a fiscal year and the adoption of additional budget resolutions. In 1985, the Budget Act was amended to eliminate the second budget resolution. Although the option for additional budget resolutions remains in effect, a second budget resolution for a given fiscal year has not been adopted since FY1982 (S.Con.Res. 50, 97th Congress).

¹⁰ Section 303 of the Budget Act, codified as amended at 2 U.S.C. §634.

The Budget Act sets a target date of April 15 for adoption of the budget resolution. Historically, however, Congress has most often adopted budget resolutions after this date. Since FY1986, the first fiscal year for which this target date applied,¹¹ Congress has adopted a budget resolution on or before April 15 on four occasions—for FY1994, FY2000, FY2001, and FY2004.¹² Most budget resolutions have been adopted for the upcoming fiscal year in the months of April through June. In recent practice, though, Congress has adopted budget resolutions with reconciliation instructions after the beginning of the initial fiscal year for which it applied. Such budget resolutions were adopted for FY2017, FY2018, FY2021, and FY2025.¹³

There have been several fiscal years in recent decades for which Congress has adopted no budget resolution. This has been the case for 13 of the 50 fiscal years since the first budget resolution was adopted for FY1976. All 13 of these instances occurred between FY1999 and FY2025, including for nine fiscal years since FY2011. For fiscal years when Congress has not adopted a budget resolution, the House and/or Senate have often employed alternative legislative measures (collectively referred to as “deeming resolutions”) to establish certain enforceable budgetary levels, especially those related to the annual appropriations process.¹⁴ The timing of adoption as well as the form of deeming resolutions has varied in the House and Senate historically.

Reconciliation Legislation

Reconciliation is an optional process through which Congress can develop and consider legislation changing mandatory (or direct) spending, revenues, and/or the debt limit using expedited procedures. To use the reconciliation process, Congress is required to first adopt a budget resolution that includes what are known as reconciliation directives (or instructions).¹⁵ These directives instruct specified House and Senate Committees to recommend, by a certain date, changes in laws under its jurisdiction to meet certain budgetary targets outlined in the budget resolution. The resulting reconciliation legislation is eligible to be considered in the House and Senate under special expedited procedures established in the Budget Act. Most notably, these procedures allow the Senate to pass reconciliation legislation without the need to invoke cloture, which would require the support of three-fifths of all Senators.

The timetable established in the Budget Act contemplates that consideration of reconciliation legislation be completed by June 15. In practice, the timing of reconciliation largely depends on the budgetary plan adopted in the budget resolution for that fiscal year. The timing of a budget resolution, the deadline for instructed committees to submit legislative proposals, and various other political and economic factors may influence when reconciliation legislation is enacted. These factors may also influence the length of the reconciliation process in terms of the time

¹¹ The Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-177) amended the Budget Act to make April 15 the target date for adopting a budget resolution. Prior to this law, the deadline was May 15. Prior to this change, Congress had adopted a budget resolution prior to May 15 on two occasions—for FY1976 (H.Con.Res. 218; adopted May 14, 1975) and FY1977 (S.Con.Res. 109; adopted May 13, 1976).

¹² H.Con.Res. 64, 103rd Congress (FY1994 budget resolution; adopted April 1, 1993); H.Con.Res. 68, 106th Congress (FY2000 budget resolution; adopted April 15, 1999); H.Con.Res. 290, 106th Congress (FY2001 budget resolution; adopted April 13, 2000); and H.Con.Res. 95, 108th Congress (FY2004 budget resolution; adopted April 11, 2003).

¹³ S.Con.Res. 3, 115th Congress (FY2017 budget resolution; adopted January 13, 2017); H.Con.Res. 71, 115th Congress (FY2018 budget resolution; adopted October 26, 2017); S.Con.Res. 5, 117th Congress (FY2021 budget resolution; adopted February 5, 2021); and H.Con.Res. 14, 119th Congress (FY2025 budget resolution; adopted April 10, 2025).

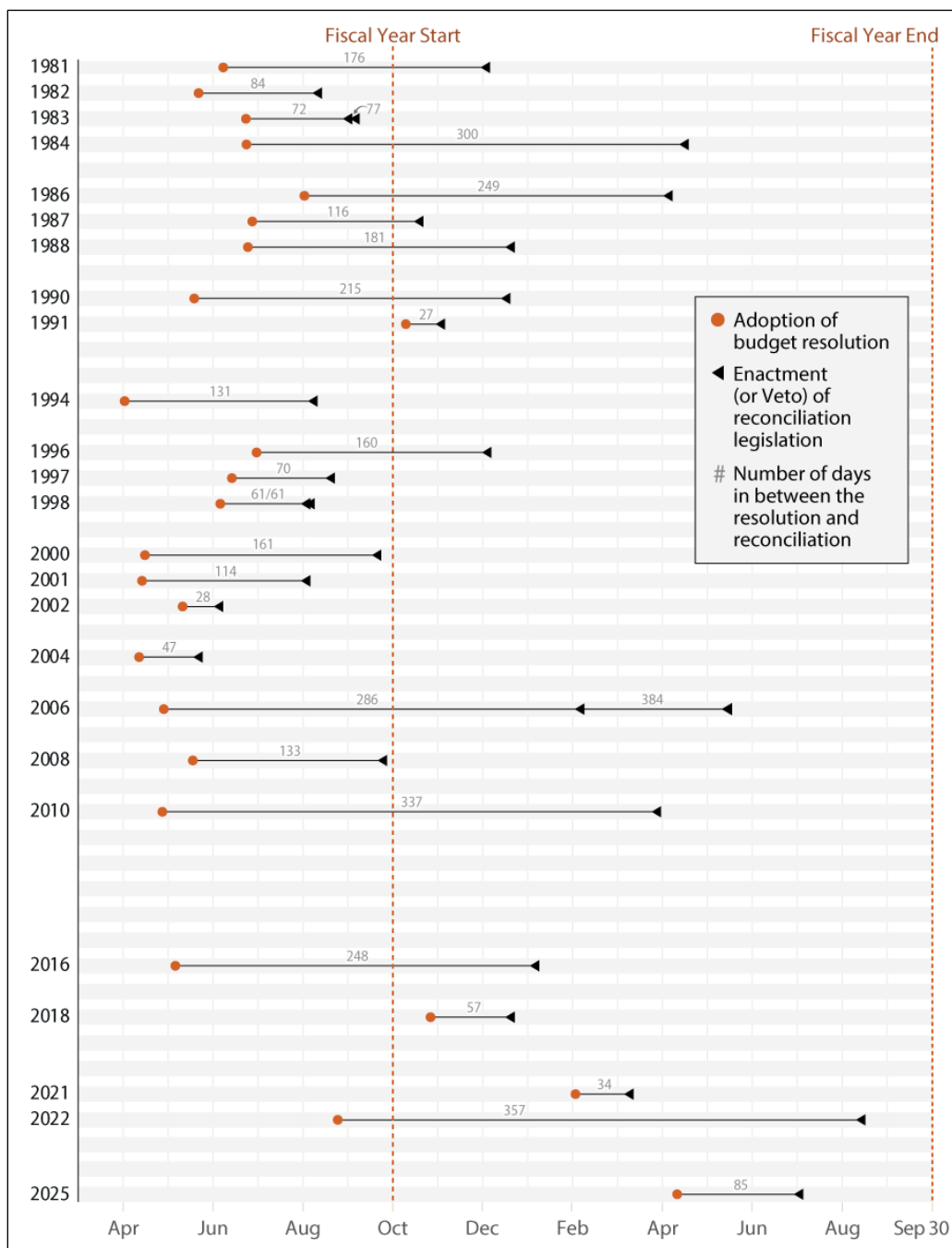
¹⁴ For more on deeming resolutions, see CRS Report R44296, *Deeming Resolutions: Budget Enforcement in the Absence of a Budget Resolution*, by Megan S. Lynch.

¹⁵ For more on reconciliation directives, see CRS Report R41186, *Reconciliation Directives: Components and Enforcement*, by Megan S. Lynch.

between the adoption of a budget resolution and the enactment (or veto or failure) of subsequent reconciliation legislation. **Figure 1** visualizes the timing of the reconciliation process for all reconciliation measures passed by Congress since FY1981—beginning with the adoption of a budget resolution and ending with the enactment or veto of reconciliation legislation.

Figure I. Timing of Budget Resolution Adoption and Enactment (or Veto) of Reconciliation Legislation

FY1981-FY2025



Sources: Information compiled from CRS Report R40480, *Budget Reconciliation Measures Enacted into Law Since 1980*, by Megan S. Lynch; the CRS Appropriations Status Table; and Congress.gov.

Notes: “Number of days in between the resolution and reconciliation” refers to the number of calendar days between the adoption of a budget resolution by Congress and the enactment or veto of reconciliation legislation pursuant to that budget resolution. “Fiscal Year Start” and “Fiscal Year End” refer to the beginning (October 1) and end (September 30), respectively, of the first fiscal year for which the relevant budget resolution applies. The President has vetoed reconciliation legislation on four occasions (reconciliation legislation for FY1996, FY2000,

FY2001, and FY2016). This graphic does not include the one reconciliation bill that failed in the Senate (H.R. 1628 [115th Congress], the American Health Care Act of 2017).

Since the first reconciliation legislation was enacted for FY1981, Congress has passed 28 reconciliation measures, and the President has signed 24 into law. Over this period, there has been significant variation in the timing of when Congress has considered such legislation.¹⁶ Congress passed 12 of the 27 reconciliation measures prior to the start of the initial fiscal year for which the budget resolution applied. Of these, one passed in May, one in June, six in August, and four in September.¹⁷ Congress passed the remaining 16 reconciliation measures after the initial fiscal year for which the budget resolution applied began. One such measure passed in October, one in November, five in December, one in January, one in February, two in March, two in April, one in May, one in July, and one in August. On average, from the adoption of the budget resolution to the enactment (or veto) of the 28 reconciliation measures passed by Congress, the reconciliation process took about five months (roughly 152 days) to complete. This ranges from a low of under a month to a high of around 12.5 months.¹⁸

Development and Consideration of Appropriations Bills

The appropriations process consists of the development and consideration of appropriations legislation for each fiscal year. Through this process, Congress makes decisions on discretionary spending, which makes up roughly one-quarter to one-third of federal spending each fiscal year and generally consists of funding for the operations of most federal agencies and most of the programs, projects, and activities each carries out. Appropriations legislation also provides funding for certain mandatory spending programs—some of which are referred to as “appropriated entitlements”—that are controlled through authorizing laws but whose funding is provided in appropriations acts.

The appropriations process consists of the development and consideration of 12 regular appropriations measures for each fiscal year. Congress also typically develops and considers supplemental appropriations measures that provide funding in addition to the amounts provided in the regular bills, as well as continuing appropriations measures (known more commonly as “continuing resolutions,” or CRs) that provide temporary funding in the event some or all of the regular bills are not enacted by the start of the fiscal year.¹⁹

¹⁶ For more on the timing of the reconciliation process, see CRS Report RL30458, *The Budget Reconciliation Process: Timing of Legislative Action*, by Megan S. Lynch.

¹⁷ Most of the reconciliation bills referenced in this paragraph passed in separate calendar years, covered different fiscal years, and were developed pursuant to different budget resolutions. Two reconciliation bills for a given fiscal year were enacted pursuant to a single budget resolution and in the same calendar year on three occasions—FY1983 (both reconciliation bills—P.L. 97-248 and P.L. 97-253—were enacted in September 1982 and were developed pursuant to S.Con.Res. 92), FY1998 (both reconciliation bills—P.L. 105-33 and P.L. 105-34—were enacted on August 5, 1997, and were developed pursuant to H.Con.Res. 84), and FY2006 (one reconciliation bill [P.L. 109-171] was enacted in February 2006 and the other [P.L. 109-222] in May 2006 and were developed pursuant to H.Con.Res. 95). Two reconciliation bills were enacted in calendar year 1986, but each was for a different fiscal year and developed pursuant to different budget resolutions (P.L. 99-272—a reconciliation bill for FY1986—was enacted in April 1986 and developed pursuant to S.Con.Res. 32; P.L. 99-509—a reconciliation bill for FY1987—was enacted in October 1986 and developed pursuant to S.Con.Res. 120).

¹⁸ Twenty-seven days passed between the adoption of the FY1991 budget resolution (H.Con.Res. 310, 101st Congress) on October 9, 1990, and the enactment of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-508) on November 5, 1990. Three hundred eighty-four days passed between the adoption of the FY2006 budget resolution (H.Con.Res. 95, 109th Congress) on April 28, 2005, and the enactment of the Tax Increase Prevention and Reconciliation Act of 2005 (P.L. 109-222) on May 17, 2006.

¹⁹ For more on supplemental appropriations measures, see the section of CRS Report R47106, *The Appropriations* (continued...)

October 1 represents a hard deadline for Congress to enact appropriations for the new fiscal year, as much of the funding provided in appropriations acts expires at the end of the fiscal year. Current law generally prohibits the obligation of funds in the absence of appropriations.²⁰ When a lapse in funding occurs (known as a *funding gap* or *funding lapse*), federal agencies are generally required to commence a *shutdown* of affected projects and activities.²¹

Like other aspects of the congressional budget process, the timing of the actions and decisions that make up the appropriations process varies for each fiscal year.

Regular Appropriations Bills

Most of the actions and decisions that make up the appropriations process involve the development and consideration of the 12 regular appropriations bills for each fiscal year. The House and Senate Appropriations Committees—which have sole jurisdiction over the development of appropriations legislation—are each organized into 12 subcommittees that are responsible for developing their chambers’ versions of each of the regular appropriations bills.²² The development of each regular appropriations bill is generally intended to follow a sequential process involving consideration at the subcommittee, full committee, and chamber levels, as well as action between the chambers to complete the process. While this sequence remains generally consistent from year to year, the timing and occurrence of each phase in the process may differ to various degrees for each regular bill in either chamber. For most fiscal years in recent practice, some or all of the regular bills in either chamber have not gone through all of the traditional stages of consideration before final enactment.

Preliminary Action

The House and Senate Appropriations Committees typically begin action on annual appropriations measures shortly after the submission of the President’s budget for the upcoming fiscal year. When the President’s budget is delayed, the Appropriations Committees have on occasion taken steps toward the development of the regular bills prior to its submission. Preliminary actions by the Appropriations Committees include holding hearings at which Administration officials testify on their budgetary requests for the upcoming fiscal year, as well as soliciting requests from individual Members or Senators with regard to their appropriations priorities.²³ While the timing of these actions has varied, they have most often occurred in the late winter or spring.

Process: A Brief Overview, by James V. Saturno and Megan S. Lynch titled “Supplemental Appropriations.” For more on supplemental appropriations measures enacted in recent decades, see CBO, “Supplemental Appropriations Enacted Since Fiscal Year 2000 (as of December 21, 2024),” <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/2025-06/2024-12-21-Supplemental-Appropriations.pdf>.

²⁰ The Antideficiency Act; 31 U.S.C. §§1341-1342, 1511-1519.

²¹ This includes the furlough of non-excepted personnel. For more on funding gaps and government shutdowns, see CRS Report RS20348, *Federal Funding Gaps: A Brief Overview*, by James V. Saturno; and CRS Report RL34680, *Shutdown of the Federal Government: Causes, Processes, and Effects*, coordinated by Clinton T. Brass.

²² For more on the Appropriations Committees’ subcommittee structure, see CRS Report RL31572, *Appropriations Subcommittee Structure: History of Changes from 1920 to 2025*, by James V. Saturno.

²³ The Appropriations Committees typically give Members and Senators several weeks to develop and submit appropriations requests after publishing guidance, but the exact duration may vary. For example, the House Appropriations Committee issued guidance for FY2026 appropriations requests on April 2, 2025, and the deadlines for submission were either May 2, May 16, or May 23 (depending on the subcommittee and, in some cases, type of request). In the Senate, the Appropriations Committee issued guidance for FY2026 appropriations requests on April 10, 2025, and the deadlines for submission spanned from May 6 to June 4.

Committee Consideration

The House has historically initiated consideration of regular appropriations measures, and the Budget Act sets a target date of June 10 for the House Appropriations Committee to report its final regular appropriations bill for the upcoming fiscal year.²⁴ Although the committee has not met this target in recent decades, the House Appropriations Committee and its subcommittees have considered most of the 12 regular appropriations bills for each fiscal year between April and July. From FY2008 through FY2025, the House Appropriations subcommittees considered roughly 99% of total possible regular appropriations bills (213 out of 216), and the full committee reported roughly 88% (190 out of 216).²⁵ Over this period, the House Appropriations subcommittees and full committee considered all such bills between April and the end of July.²⁶

The Senate's record of considering regular appropriations bills at the subcommittee and full committee levels has been more varied in recent decades. From FY2008 through FY2025, the Senate Appropriations subcommittees considered roughly 55% of total possible regular appropriations bills (119 out of 216), and the full committee reported roughly 75% (163 out of 216). In recent practice, the Senate Appropriations Committee has frequently chosen to forgo subcommittee consideration and move directly to full committee consideration. From FY2021 through FY2025, one regular appropriations bill was marked up at the subcommittee level in the Senate.²⁷ When the Senate Appropriations subcommittees and/or full committee have considered regular appropriations bills in recent decades, they have done so in April at the earliest and December at the latest but most often between June and September.²⁸

²⁴ In recent practice, it has been common for the Senate Appropriations Committee to develop and report an original Senate bill prior to receiving a House-passed measure.

²⁵ For the purpose of this report, "total possible regular appropriations bills" means 12 regular, individual appropriations bills in each chamber for each fiscal year. FY2008 was the first fiscal year for which the House and Senate Appropriations Committees were organized into their current structure. At the beginning of the 110th Congress (2007), the House and Senate Appropriations Committees were reorganized into 12 parallel subcommittees, each of which is responsible for developing its chamber's version of one of the regular bills for each fiscal year. This organization has remained consistent since the appropriations process for FY2008. In the 119th Congress, the House Appropriations Committee renamed the Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs the Subcommittee on National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs, but its jurisdiction remained the same.

²⁶ From FY1999 to FY2025, the House Appropriations subcommittees and full committee did not consider any regular appropriations bills prior to April and considered regular appropriations bills after July for four fiscal years (FY1999, FY2002, FY2003, and FY2012).

²⁷ The Senate Appropriations Committee's Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies subcommittee marked up and forwarded its version of the FY2022 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies appropriations bill (S. 2599) on August 4, 2021. No regular appropriations bills were considered at the subcommittee level in the Senate for FY2021, FY2023, FY2024, and FY2025. For FY2024 and FY2025, the Senate Appropriations Committee considered regular appropriations bills at the full committee level despite forgoing subcommittee consideration. For FY2021 and FY2023, the Senate Appropriations Committee did not consider any regular appropriations bills at either the subcommittee or the full committee level. On July 9, 2025, the Senate Appropriations Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies subcommittee marked up and forwarded its version of the FY2026 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (S. 2354) to the full committee.

²⁸ From FY1999 to FY2025, the earliest a regular appropriations bill was considered in the Senate at the subcommittee level was April 13 and April 14 at the full committee level (for the FY2017 Energy and Water and Military Construction-Veterans Affairs appropriations bills, respectively). Over the same period, the latest a regular appropriations bill was considered in the Senate at the subcommittee level was October 10 (for the FY2002 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill) and December 4 at the full committee level (for the FY2002 Defense appropriations bill).

Initial Floor Consideration

Initial floor consideration of regular appropriations bills generally refers to the House or Senate considering its chamber's version of one or more regular appropriations bills prior to resolving differences between the chambers and enacting a final version. The Budget Act sets a target date of June 30 for the House to complete action on regular appropriations bills for the upcoming fiscal year. It sets no such target date for the Senate. In practice, initial floor consideration of regular appropriations bills in the House and Senate in recent decades has begun in the spring or summer and, on several occasions, continued into the new fiscal year.

The House and Senate may consider all, some, or none of the regular appropriations bills for a given fiscal year on initial consideration, and the frequency of such consideration has varied in recent decades. The House has passed at least one regular appropriations bill on initial consideration for each fiscal year between FY1999 and FY2025. Over the same period, the Senate considered at least one regular appropriations bill on initial consideration for 17 fiscal years and considered none for 10.²⁹ In recent practice, the Senate has often acted on House-passed appropriations legislation at a later stage in the process.

Continuing Resolutions

To avert funding gaps and government shutdowns when one or more regular appropriations bills have not been enacted by October 1, Congress typically provides interim funding to agencies by enacting CRs.³⁰ One or more CRs has been enacted for all fiscal years but three since FY1977—when the fiscal year was set to begin on October 1—including for each fiscal year since FY1998.³¹

CRs vary in both the timing of their enactment and their duration. Congress has typically enacted an initial CR in September in the final days or weeks of a fiscal year that provides funding for the first weeks or months of the new fiscal year beginning on October 1. In recent practice, the initial CR enacted for a given fiscal year has typically lasted until November or December.³² Congress may subsequently enact additional CRs upon the initial CR's expiration to continue temporary funding in the event some or all of the regular bills remain unenacted. The number and aggregate duration of CRs have varied in recent decades (as shown in **Figure 2**).

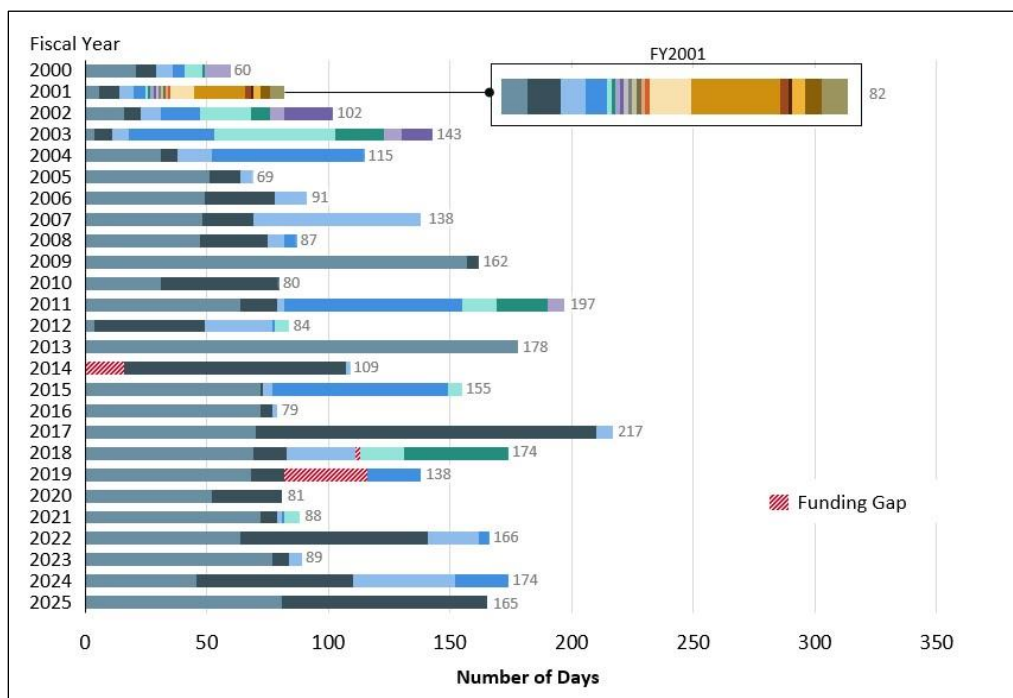
²⁹ The Senate considered no regular appropriations bills on initial consideration for FY2009, FY2011, FY2013, FY2014, FY2015, FY2018, FY2021, FY2022, FY2023, and FY2025.

³⁰ For more on CRs, see CRS Report R46595, *Continuing Resolutions: Overview of Components and Practices*, coordinated by James V. Saturno.

³¹ Congress enacted all regular appropriations bills prior to October 1 for FY1977, FY1989, FY1995, and FY1997, although two CRs were enacted for FY1977 to provide funding for certain activities that were not included in regular appropriations acts.

³² For example, from FY2016 through FY2025, the initial CR enacted for each fiscal year lasted until November on two occasions and December on seven occasions.

Figure 2. Aggregate Duration of Short-Term Continuing Resolutions and Funding Gaps
FY2000-FY2025



Source: Information compiled from CRS Report R46595, *Continuing Resolutions: Overview of Components and Practices*, coordinated by James V. Saturno; CRS Report RS20348, *Federal Funding Gaps: A Brief Overview*, by James V. Saturno; and the CRS Appropriations Status Table.

Notes: Each segment of a fiscal year's bar represents the duration that one short-term CR or funding gap was in effect. Funding gaps—which occurred over this period in FY2014, FY2018, and FY2019—are represented with a red-striped pattern, as indicated in the graph's key. The left-most segment for each fiscal year, except where a funding gap is indicated, represents the first CR enacted by Congress and taking effect on October 1. The number on the right-hand side of each bar represents the total number of days between October 1 and the enactment of the final full-year appropriations measure for that fiscal year (including October 1). For FY2007, FY2011, and FY2013, and FY2025 some or all of the regular appropriations bills were funded through a full-year CR. These measures are considered full-year appropriations measures for the purpose of this graph and therefore are not included. This graph also does not convey the number of regular appropriations bills covered by each CR. CRs can provide funding for all or only some of the regular appropriations bills. Enactment of a CR does not mean that none of the regular appropriations bills was enacted prior, nor does it preclude passage of regular appropriations measures while the CR is in effect.

Final Enactment of Regular Appropriations

The enactment of full-year appropriations for accounts funded through all 12 of the regular appropriations bills generally marks the end of the regular appropriations process for each fiscal year.³³ For most fiscal years, Congress has completed the appropriations process by enacting the 12 regular appropriations acts either separately or as part of consolidated appropriations measures

³³ The enactment of all regular (or other full-year) appropriations does not preclude Congress from developing and considering other appropriations legislation, such as supplemental appropriations legislation, at any point throughout the fiscal year.

(often referred to as “omnibus” or “minibus” appropriations acts).³⁴ On occasion, however, Congress has completed the process by enacting a CR covering some or all of the regular appropriations acts through the end of the fiscal year (often referred to as a “full-year CR”).³⁵

In recent decades, most regular appropriations bills have not been enacted prior to the start of the fiscal year on October 1. From FY1997—the last fiscal year for which all regular appropriations were enacted on or before October 1—through FY2025, 25 out of a total of 330 regular appropriations acts were enacted on or before October 1. As a result, since the appropriations process for FY1998, the process has been completed at some point after the start of the fiscal year for which appropriations legislation is being considered. Over this period, the timing of final enactment of full-year appropriations for a given fiscal year has varied, although it has most often been in December (for 10 fiscal years) or March (for seven fiscal years).³⁶

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³⁴ Omnibus appropriations acts have been used to enact the most regular appropriations bills in recent decades. For more on omnibus appropriations, see CRS Insight IN12324, *Omnibus Appropriations: Overview of Recent Practice*, by Drew C. Aherne.

³⁵ Full-year CRs have been enacted on four occasions since FY2000: for FY2007 (P.L. 110-5, covering nine of the regular appropriations acts); FY2011 (Division B of P.L. 112-10, covering 11 of the regular appropriations acts); FY2013 (Division F of P.L. 113-6, covering seven of the regular appropriations acts); and FY2025 (Division A of P.L. 119-4, covering all 12 regular appropriations acts). For more on the FY2025 full-year CR, see CRS Report R48517, *Section-by-Section Summary of the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act, 2025 (Division A of P.L. 119-4)*, coordinated by Drew C. Aherne.

³⁶ From FY1998 to FY2025, the final full-year appropriations act enacted for a given fiscal year was enacted once in October (FY1999), twice in November (FY1998 and FY2000), 10 times in December (FY2001, FY2005, FY2006, FY2008, FY2010, FY2012, FY2016, FY2020, FY2021, and FY2023), three times in January (FY2002, FY2004, and FY2014), two times in February (FY2003 and FY2019), seven times in March (FY2009, FY2013, FY2015, FY2018, FY2022, FY2024, and FY2025), once in April (FY2011), and once in May (FY2017).