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As Congress adjourns to go home for the midterm election cycle, it passed a continuing resolution (CR) to avoid a government shutdown. The CR funds programs at FY 2014 levels, and runs from September 30, the last day of FY 2014, until December 11, the last day the House is scheduled to be in session.

The CR as written does not have an impact on student aid funding levels, as new awards begin July 1, 2015. After the elections, Congress will need to decide how to finalize FY 2015 appropriations. The options are to:

• Enact a year-long CR;
• Extend the current CR until January 2015 and the new Congress;
• Enact an omnibus bill that encompasses all 12 spending bills; or
• Combine conferenced bills with a CR for unfinished bills.

The House Appropriations Committee has written 10 of 12 bills, while the Senate Appropriations Committee has written 8 of 12 bills. The Senate Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee released its report in July, highlighting a scheduled $100 increase in the Pell Grant maximum, to $5,830, and increases in the other student aid programs to bring them out of the hole created by sequestration cuts.

The House Labor-HHS-Education Democrats introduced a bill last week to illustrate their funding priorities, which include increases in student aid.

Whether or not a final Labor-HHS-Education bill is negotiated, or a long-term CR is written, NAICU supports increased funding for the student aid programs in FY 2015.

What Congress is able to accomplish in the lame duck session will depend on the election results. Republicans are hoping to take over the Senate, while the House is expected to remain under Republican control. The Senate races in Louisiana and Georgia are so close that pundits wonder if they will result in run-offs to take place in December and January. Any run-off would delay legislative action, including further CR work, and leadership elections that usually take place in the lame duck session.

Additional resources

FY 2015 Student Aid Funding Stalled - NAICU Washington Update, July 8, 2014
Senate Increases Student Aid Funding - NAICU Washington Update, June 11, 2014

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Washington Update is available to NAICU member presidents and their staff via e-mail, and is archived on the NAICU Web site, both as individual stories and as a complete-issue PDF file, formatted for printing.

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