

# ISSUE BRIEF

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## House Legislative Branch Appropriations Bill Freezes Pay for Members of Congress but Avoids Further Spending Cuts

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Next week, the House of Representatives is expected to consider the legislative branch appropriations bill, the third of 12 appropriations bills providing discretionary funding for the federal government. The legislative branch appropriations bill provides general funding for the overall operation of Congress, including the U.S. Capitol Police (USCP); the Government Publishing Office (GPO); the Government Accountability Office (GAO); the Congressional Budget Office (CBO); and others.

The bill provides \$3.34 billion in budget authority, matching the current year's funding level. It includes a \$1 billion hole, intentionally designed as a placeholder for Senate funding. Long-standing tradition allows each chamber to consider its own funding requirements.

Although the bill freezes spending, it fails to take advantage of several opportunities to cut spending. For example, the bill increases funding for the Capitol Police by \$21 million and for the CBO by \$1.5 million. These increases are offset by reductions in funding for the Architect of the Capitol, the GPO, and the Open World Leadership Center. This bill should realize those cuts instead of using them to increase spending elsewhere.

### U.S. Capitol Police

The bill provides the USCP \$369 million, more than \$21 million above fiscal year (FY) 2015 levels. The USCP is a federal law enforcement agency charged with protecting Congress, the Capitol complex, employees, and visitors. With 1,775 sworn officers and another 370 civilian personnel,<sup>1</sup> there is one USCP officer for every five staffers or Members of Congress.<sup>2</sup> The force is nearly one-third the size of the entire U.S. Secret Service force.

**Recommendation.** The bill should freeze funding for the U.S. Capitol Police at current levels, which would save more than \$20 million. The Capitol Police force is one of the highest paid federal law enforcement agencies. The USCP minimum starting salary is \$55,653, while the FBI starting salary is \$43,114.<sup>3</sup> The high USCP officer base pay does not account for the \$31 million in estimated overtime pay next year—nearly 10 percent of the USCP operating budget.

### John Stennis Center

The John Stennis Center is a legislative program intended to be a living tribute to John Stennis's (D-MS) career as a Senator. The bill would provide \$430,000 for the program, the same funding level as was provided in FY 2015. According to its materials, the Center's agenda is to attract youth to careers in public service, promote leadership skills, and encourage friendships among like-minded public servants.

**Recommendation.** While budget deficits remain high at a level projected to top \$1 trillion in the coming decade, Congress is the first place to start when discussing spending priorities. There are countless private entities providing services similar to the

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This paper, in its entirety, can be found at <http://report.heritage.org/ib4410>

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TABLE 1

## House Legislative Branch Appropriations

IN MILLIONS OF DOLLARS

	FY 2015 Enacted	President's FY 2016 Request	FY 2016 302(b)	FY 2016*
Discretionary Budget Authority	3,341	3,513	3,341	3,341
Senate Items	959	n/a	959	n/a
<b>Total Discretionary Budget Authority (includes Senate Items)</b>	<b>4,300</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>4,300</b>	<b>n/a</b>

\* Excludes emergency funds.

**Note:** The congressional budget resolution passed by Congress is the mechanism for setting the overall spending caps, also known as the 302(a), as required by the Budget Control Act. The Appropriations Committee is responsible for subdividing the 302(a) allocations among the 12 appropriation subcommittees through what is known as the 302(b) suballocations. The FY 2016 302(a) spending caps, consistent with the Budget Control Act, amounts to \$1.017 trillion

**Source:** U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Appropriations, <http://appropriations.house.gov/> (accessed May 19, 2015).

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TABLE 2

## Breakdown of House Legislative Branch Appropriations

DISCRETIONARY BUDGET AUTHORITY, IN THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS

	FY 2015 Enacted	FY 2016	Change in Dollars	Percentage Change
House of Representatives	1,180,736	1,180,736	0	0.0%
U.S. Capitol Police	347,959	369,000	21,041	6.0%
Congressional Budget Office	45,700	47,270	1,570	3.4%
Architect of the Capitol	505,948	496,871	-9,077	-1.8%
Library of Congress	590,921	591,431	510	0.1%
Government Printing Office	119,993	110,236	-9,757	-8.1%
Government Accountability Office	522,000	522,000	0	0.0%
All other	29,145	24,858	-4,287	-14.7%
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>3,342,402</b>	<b>3,342,402</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0%</b>
Offsetting adjustments	-1,000	-1,000	—	—
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,341,402</b>	<b>3,341,402</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0%</b>

**Source:** U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Appropriations, <http://appropriations.house.gov/> (accessed May 19, 2015).

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1. Kim C. Dine, testimony before Subcommittee on Legislative Branch, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of Representatives, <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/AP/AP24/20150225/102987/HHRG-114-AP24-Wstate-DineC-20150225.pdf> (accessed May 13, 2015).
2. Shawn Reese, William L. Painter, Jared C. Nagel, and Daniel J. Richardson, "U.S. Secret Service Protection Mission Funding and Staffing: Fact Sheet," Congressional Research Service *Report for Congress*, November 25, 2014, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/homsec/R43797.pdf> (accessed May 13, 2015).
3. U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Capitol Police: Retirement Benefits, Pay, Duties, and Attrition Compared to Other Federal Police Forces*, GAO-12-58, January 2012, <http://www.gao.gov/assets/590/587909.pdf> (accessed May 13, 2015).

Stennis Center program. The Young Leaders program at The Heritage Foundation is one example. The John Stennis Center program was eliminated in the FY 2013 House legislative branch appropriation bill and should be eliminated in this bill as well.

### **Conclusion**

The legislative branch appropriations bill deserves praise for leaving funding levels constant at FY 2015 levels, but it fails to capitalize on several opportunities to save taxpayers money. Programs like the

John Stennis Center should be further reduced or eliminated entirely. The Capitol Police force should reduce large overtime expenses and make their salaries consistent with other federal law enforcement agencies. These small changes could save taxpayers millions of dollars.

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