

Congress Gives Itself a Bonus in Omnibus

The House and Senate increased their own budgets in the \$1.3 trillion omnibus spending package.

The Senate increased its total salaries of officers and employees by \$12.6 million in the 2,232-page bill that lawmakers had fewer than 48 hours to read and vote on. The bill avoids a government shutdown that would take place at midnight on Friday.

Aside from giving their own institutions a bonus, the omnibus also gives away millions to prevent “elderly falls,” promote breastfeeding, and fight “excessive alcohol use.”

The legislation increases the Senate budget to \$919.9 million, up \$48.8 million from fiscal year 2017, according to the congressional summary of the bill.

“The increase provides funding necessary for critical modernization and upgrades of the Senate financial management system and investments in IT security,” the summary states.

Meanwhile, the House of Representatives increased its budget to \$1.2 billion, which is \$10.9 million above 2017 levels.

Salaries of staffers in the Senate are also set for an increase. Division I of the legislation breaks down the total salaries of officers and employees, which are being raised from \$182 million in 2017 to \$194.8 million in the final bill, an increase of \$12.58 million.

The Senate also increased its expense account, as expense allowances are going from \$177,000 to \$192,000, an increase of \$15,000.

The House, however, kept its budget for salaries the same at \$22.3 million and lowered expenses by \$4.4 million.

Committee offices got an increase of \$22.9 million in salaries, from \$181.5 million in 2017 to \$204.4 million in the final bill.

The omnibus also boosts funding for health research, including a \$3 billion increase to the ever-growing budget of the National Institutes of Health.

Health care spending in the omnibus includes \$4 million to combat “excessive alcohol use” through a CDC prevention and health promotion program.

Another \$15 million goes to study “high obesity counties” and an increase of \$5 million for the CDC program that seeks to “address obesity in counties” by leveraging “the community extension services provided by land grant universities who are mandated to translate science into practical action and promote healthy lifestyles.”

The bill also spends \$2.05 million to prevent “elderly falls” and \$8 million in the form of “breastfeeding grants.”

The legislation also mandates the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau to improve “wine label accuracy.”

The House passed the spending package Friday, and the Senate is expected to follow.

Source: <http://freebeacon.com/politics/congress-gives-bonus-omnibus/>

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