



The Appropriations Process

The United States uses a “fiscal year” rather than a “calendar year” for its budget. The fiscal year runs from October 1 through September 30. It is designated by the year in which it concludes rather than the year in which it starts. Thus, Fiscal Year 2011 runs from October 1, 2010 through September 30, 2011.

Submission of the President’s Budget to Congress No later than February 2, 2010

President Obama is required to submit his budget request to Congress by February 2 (though Congress has the ability to extend this deadline if it so chooses). More than likely, funding for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will be included in this request for Fiscal Year 2011. The Obama Administration refers to these wars as “overseas contingency operations” in its budget materials.

Budget Resolution Bill

Each year Congress passes a Budget Resolution Bill that sets the very broad parameters of spending levels for the next Fiscal Year’s budget. This bill is usually acted upon by the House and Senate in March and April.

Defense Authorization Bill: The Armed Services Committees March - April – May - June

Both the House and the Senate have an Armed Services Committee. This Committee develops the Defense Authorization Bill. This bill spells out military programs and funding levels for each of the programs. It does not however actually create the legal authority for the Department of Defense to spend the money (this will be done by the Appropriations Bill). While it does not give the authority to spend money, this bill does establish the essential framework of those items that will ultimately be included in the Appropriations Bill. Thus, it will be important to attempt to get funds for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars removed from the Authorization Bill.

**Defense Appropriations Bill:
The Appropriations Committee
April – May – June – July**

Both the House and the Senate have an Appropriations Committee, each of which also have a Defense Appropriations Subcommittee. The Appropriations Committee develops the bill that in essence releases the funds for the Department of Defense to spend on various programs. It almost certainly will include funds for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars for Fiscal Year 2011.

More than likely this bill will come to a vote before the full House and the full Senate sometime in July 2010. It is possible that final deliberations and votes on the bill could be delayed until September 2010, but odds are good that it will be finished in July since it is an election year and the Defense Appropriations Bill is almost one of the first appropriations bills passed by Congress.