

U.S. Senate Passes Bill to Fund National Institutes of Health in Fiscal Year 2019

On September 18, by a vote of 93-7, the United States Senate passed the Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations conference report before the start of the fiscal year—a feat not achieved since 2007! This action is important to population scientists because the bill funds several federal research and statistical agencies that provide essential direct and indirect support to the field. Specifically, the measure, H.R. 6157, which also includes funding for the Department of Defense, provides:

- \$39.1 billion for the National Institutes of Health, a \$2 billion increase over FY 2018;
- \$1.506 billion for the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development, a \$54 million increase over FY 2018;
- \$3.084 billion for the National Institute on Aging, a \$509 million increase over FY 2018;
- \$160 million for the National Center for Health Statistics, same funding level as FY 2018;
- \$615 million for the Bureau of Labor Statistics, a \$3 million increase over FY 2018; and
- \$615.5 million for the Institute of Education Sciences, a \$2 million increase over FY 2018.

The bill also includes a short-term continuing resolution to keep the rest of the federal government open until December 7 and to prevent a government shutdown when FY 2018 ends on September 30.

In addition to funding, the measure includes report language clarifying congressional spending priorities and interests. Some report highlights relevant to the Population Association of America (PAA) and Association of Population Centers (APC) include:

- A provision directing the Institute of Education Sciences to spend up to \$6 million for grants to support “activities to improve data coordination, quality and use at the local, State and national levels.”
- A transfer of \$5 million to the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General (OIG) to support increased oversight of NIH’s grant programs, especially as it relates to protecting intellectual property.
- \$12 million in the Safe Motherhood and Infant Health Program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention “to continue and expand technical assistance to State Maternal Mortality Review Committees (MMRCs) to build stronger data systems, improve data collection at the state level, and create consistency in data collection across state MMRCs.” The report also requires CDC to submit a report on how states account for maternal mortality and to recommend steps for improving data collection.

Next Steps and Action

On September 26, the House of Representatives passed the bill by a vote of 361-61. If the President signs it, it will be the first time in 22 years since the Labor/HHS bill was signed into law before the end of the fiscal year!

PAA and APC members are being urged to contact their representatives in the House of Representatives to encourage final passage of the measure so it can be sent to the President for his approval. While the president has not threatened to veto the bill, it is not entirely clear he will sign it.

PAA and APC members, particularly those from Alabama, Missouri, Vermont, and Washington, are being encouraged to send thank you notes to their senators (Shelby, Blunt, Leahy, and Murray respectively) whose leadership on the Senate Appropriations Committee facilitated passage of the bill and accommodated funding increases PAA and APC supports.