Federal Funding = Appropriations

Appropriations are decisions made by Congress to allocate funds for a given fiscal year (Oct. 1—Sept. 30). While some funding levels are mandatory (e.g., social security), others like most education and defense spending are discretionary.

According to a 2021 survey by Change Research/ACG Advocacy, two-thirds of voters believe that the U.S. spends too little on education: 5% of discretionary funds and 2% of the full budget.

A Long Unfulfilled Promise for IDEA “Full Funding”

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the primary federal education law that supports students with disabilities. Programs “authorized” under this law provide funding for schools and districts to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

Authorization ≠ Appropriation

When a program is established, the law authorizes how much funding may be provided by Congress. This is important because when IDEA was authorized, Congress pledged to fund up to 40% of the additional cost of educating students with disabilities.

In the annual appropriations process, Congress has not come anywhere close to meeting the full authorization levels of 40%.
The Appropriations Process

The flow chart shows the process that the federal government, including the Administration and Congress, must use to fund key programs. If the Sept. 30 deadline for the end of the fiscal year is not met, Congress typically enacts a Continuing Resolution (CR) to continue the previous year’s funding levels. The CR may be for a full year or for a certain period of time while Congress negotiates. If a CR is not enacted, the government shuts down—the least desirable situation.

START

Administration

Agencies develop budget proposals (e.g. Department of Education).

President submits budget request to Congress (all combined budget proposals).

Congress

Congress sets total spending levels through a budget resolution.

House and Senate Appropriations Committees develop 12 Appropriations bills.

Each bill must first pass the Senate or House Appropriations Committee before it reaches the full chamber floor.

Differences between Senate and House bills are negotiated before becoming law.

President

President signs the bill into law.

FINISH

For more information, visit www.ncld.org or contact NCLD via email: info@ncld.org
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