



May 18, 2017

## House Committee Funding and Process, 115<sup>th</sup> Congress

### Overview

Funding for House committees (except for the Committee on Appropriations) follows a two-step process of authorization and appropriation. Operating budgets for all standing and select committees of the House (except for the Committee on Appropriations) are authorized pursuant to a chamber funding resolution, and funding is provided by annual appropriations in the Legislative Branch Appropriations bill and other appropriations acts.

On March 17, 2017, the House adopted H.Res. 173, providing for the expenses of certain committees of the House of Representatives in the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress, by voice vote. The resolution authorized a total of \$266.3 million for committee expenses, \$132.7 million for the first session and \$133.6 million for the second session.

The use of committee funds is subject to chamber rules, law, and regulations promulgated by the Committee on House Administration, the Commission on Congressional Mailing Standards, and the Ethics Committee, among other House entities. These regulations may be found in a wide variety of sources, including statute, House rules, committee resolutions, the Committee Handbook, the Franking Manual, the House Ethics Manual, “Dear Colleague” letters, and formal and informal guidance. Committee funds may only be used to support the conduct of official committee business. They may not be used for personal or campaign purposes, or comingled with any Members’ Representational Allowance (MRA). Information on individual committee spending is published quarterly in the *Statements of Disbursement of the House*.

### Authorization Process

Pursuant to House Rule X, clause 6, the Committee on House Administration reports an omnibus, biennial “primary expense resolution” to cover the expenses of each standing and select committee of the House, except the Committee on Appropriations.

In preparation for the biennial resolution, House committees (except the Appropriations Committee) are required by regulations of the Committee on House Administration to submit an operating budget request for the two years of a Congress. Each committee is also required to introduce a House resolution with its proposed authorization. These actions typically take place during late February, with committees typically approving their budgets at a committee organizing meeting.

The individual resolutions are referred to the Committee on House Administration, which may hold hearings on each committee’s request. The chair and the ranking minority Member from each committee are typically the only

witnesses who testify at these hearings, giving them an opportunity to explain and defend their budgets.

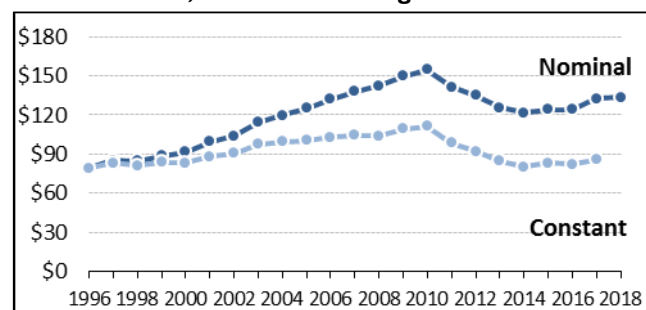
After completion of the hearings, the chair of the Committee on House Administration introduces the omnibus funding resolution for that two-year Congress, which, after its referral to the Committee on House Administration, serves as the legislative vehicle for committee markup. The resolution is typically reported out of committee without amendment.

The primary expense resolution is usually considered by the House in March of the first session of a Congress, and agreed to with little debate. Prior to this consideration, during the first three months of each new Congress, House Rule X, clause 7, authorizes House committees to continue operations at funding levels based on their authorizations from the preceding Congress. Under Rule X, clause 7, this interim funding may not exceed, per month, 9% of the previous year’s funding.

### Authorization Trends

**Figure 1** reports the aggregate committee funding authorization level from 1996 to 2018, in both nominal and real dollars. Since 1996, aggregate committee funding has increased by slightly more than 68%, from \$79.4 million in 1996 to \$133.6 million in 2018, for an average annual increase of 3.1%. In constant dollars, however, aggregate funding has increased 8.0% between 1996 and 2017, for an annual average real increase of less than four-tenths of 1%.

**Figure 1. Aggregate House Committee Authorizations, 101<sup>st</sup> – 115<sup>th</sup> Congresses**



**Source:** House Committee Funding Resolutions, 101<sup>st</sup>–115<sup>th</sup> Congress.

### Appropriations

Funding for House committees is provided in the Legislative Branch Appropriations bill. Line-item appropriations are not made for individual committees, except the Committee on Appropriations. Instead, funding is provided as a single total amount for all committees, under the heading “Committee Employees” and the

subheading “Standing Committees, Special and Select,” within the House account “Salaries and Expenses.”

Consequently, the amount appropriated for committee funding places a ceiling on *total* committee expenditures, but not on any *individual* committee’s expenditures. The expenditures of individual committees are constrained instead by their authorization.

In addition, because authorizations for committee funds are made biennially on a calendar-year basis and appropriations are made annually on a fiscal-year basis, there is no one-to-one correspondence between the authorization and the appropriations in any given year. For any individual biennial funding resolution, funds may be drawn from money appropriated in three different fiscal years.

In FY2017, \$127.1 million was appropriated for House standing committees (except for the Appropriations Committee) in the Consolidated Appropriations Acts, 2017, to remain available until December 31, 2018.<sup>1</sup> In FY2016, \$123.9 million was appropriated for House standing committees (except for the Appropriations Committee) in the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Acts, 2016, to remain available until December 31, 2016.<sup>2</sup>

### Majority / Minority Distribution

Clause 6(c) of House Rule X requires that “the minority party (be) treated fairly in the appointment” of committee staff employed pursuant to such expense resolutions. In recent years, the House majority leadership has encouraged its committee leaders to provide the minority with one-third of the committee staff and resources authorized in the biennial funding resolutions. Statements made by the chair and ranking Member of the Committee on House Administration at the beginning of its committee funding review in recent Congresses indicate a general consensus that all House committees should provide at least one-third minority staffing.

### Usage

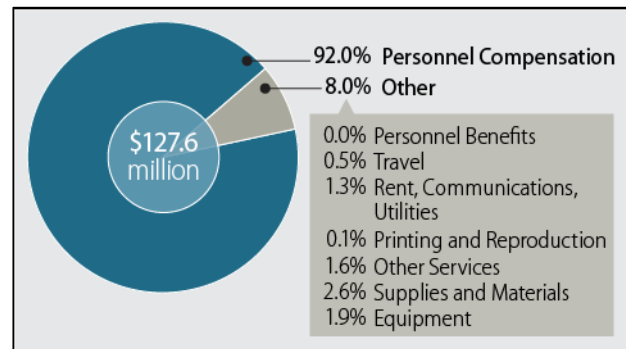
Data on committee expenditures were compiled using the quarterly *Statement of Disbursements of the House*, which reports all individual House expenditures disbursed during the previous quarter. The *Statement of Disbursements*

aggregates expenditures for individual committees across standard budget object classes used by the federal government. These include personnel compensation; personnel benefits; travel; rent, communications, and utilities; printing and reproduction; other services; supplies and materials; transportation of things; and equipment.

**Figure 2** reports aggregate committee spending by category during the second session of the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, the most recent Congress for which complete data has been analyzed.

**Figure 2. House Committee Expenditures, by Category**

112<sup>th</sup> Congress, second session (2012)



As shown in the figure, “Personnel Compensation” accounted for 92% of total committee spending. Beyond these staff expenses, committees spent an aggregate of 1.9% of their expenditures on “Equipment,” 2.6% on “Supplies and Materials,” and 0.5% on travel.

For more information on House committee funding, see CRS Report RL32794, *House Committee Funding Requests and Authorizations, 104th-115th Congresses*, by Matthew E. Glassman and CRS Report R42778, *House Committee Funding: Description of Process and Analysis of Disbursements*.

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<sup>1</sup> P.L. 115-31.

<sup>2</sup> P.L. 114-113.

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