

# Congress Returns, Appropriations Path Forward Still Unclear; Zika Funding Debate Continues

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## Legislative Activity

### Congress Returns, Appropriations Path Forward Still Unclear

*Congress* returned from a seven week recess, but there is still no clear path forward for a Continuing Resolution (CR), which must pass before September 30. Although the Senate is scheduled to be in session until October 7, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) are working to pass a CR this week and adjourn as early as September 16. However, issues over Zika funding and policy matters such as Planned Parenthood must still be resolved.

Some Members of the House have indicated they would accept the Senate's CR should it pass and be sent to that Chamber. House Republicans met on Friday morning, but left the conference meeting without a plan. Conservative members of the House Freedom Caucus would like a CR to extend into 2017, but many other members of the conference would prefer a December date. When Congress returns at that time, the House would then take up a series of "minibus" bills, combining and voting on two to three spending measures at a time as opposed to all twelve. It is possible that only a few "minibus" bills- such as Defense and Homeland- would be voted on and the other more controversial bills like Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education would be wrapped up into a CR.

President Obama has invited House and Senate leadership to the White House on Monday to discuss the Administration's priorities, and the spending measures are expected to be a main focus.

### Zika Funding Debate

On Tuesday, the Senate voted on two procedural votes to move forward on a Zika conference report (H.R. 2577) which failed largely along party lines. Democrats continue to object to the \$750 million in offsets, which rescind \$107 million provided in 2014 to combat the Ebola virus, and another \$543 million in unused accounts provided as part of the Affordable Care Act for U.S. territories to set up health exchanges. The most contentious policy provision in the legislation is the exclusion of family planning services focusing on contraception in the \$95 million allocation for Social Services Block Grants, mostly tabbed for use in Puerto Rico. Democrats are also opposed to repealing certain clean water regulations to allow for greater spraying of pesticides, and the omission of a provision in the House Military Construction-VA measure that would have barred the display of Confederate flag

imagery on certain veterans' cemeteries.

On the House side, Minority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD) has called for Republicans to remove the "poison pill" language and schedule a vote for a "clean" bill. Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) has said that Republicans will not provide an earmark for Planned Parenthood, but noted that there is funding for contraceptive services for other clinics in Puerto Rico. Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) has called on Congress to pass a "clean" bill, and last month discussed with Leader McConnell the possibility of lobbying House Republicans to take a vote on such legislation.

Both Leader McConnell and Speaker Ryan have indicated that Zika funding will be attached to a CR before Congress leaves this month.

### **This Week's Hearings:**

- On Wednesday, September 14, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development will hold a hearing titled "The Future of Nuclear Power." The witnesses will be:
  - The Honorable Dr. Ernest Moniz, Secretary, U.S. Department of Energy;
  - The Honorable Judd Gregg, Former U.S. Senator (R-NH); and
  - Mr. Jay Faison, Founder and CEO, The ClearPath Foundation
- On Wednesday, September 14, the Senate Budget Committee will hold a hearing titled "Oversight of the Congressional Budget Office." The witness will be:
  - Dr. Keith Hall, Director of the Congressional Budget Office

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National Law Review, Volumess VI, Number 256

Source URL: <https://natlawreview.com/article/congress-returns-appropriations-path-forward-still-unclear-zika-funding-debate>