



President's Update: Congress Passes 2012 International Affairs Budget How Did The FS Fare?

As Congress prepares to recess for the rest of 2011, here is a short update on AFSA's efforts to promote support for the international affairs budget – the 150 Account – as well as the budgets of our other member agencies, FCS, FAS and IBB.

This has been a difficult and frustrating year, marked by deep disagreements in Congress over spending priorities and much else, resulting in uncertain prospects for government agencies and federal employees, who all too often are caught up in larger disputes. Happily, Congress passed an omnibus Fiscal Year 2012 appropriations bill late on Friday, Dec. 16, funding the government for another year and averting a shutdown.

AFSA is working to confirm the details of funding levels for key accounts for the Foreign Service. A more detailed description of the legislation provided by the House Appropriations Committee can be found on pages 13-14 of the summary, which is available [here](#). Generally speaking, international affairs spending has been cut, but not as sharply as had been anticipated.

As of now, we understand that the omnibus measure provides \$42.1 billion in base funding for State & Foreign Operations, which is \$6 billion below last year's funding and \$8.7 billion below the president's request. That figure is a negotiated compromise between higher funding in an earlier Senate version, which would have provided \$44.5 billion, and a draft version in the House containing much deeper cuts. Reflecting the difficult fiscal and political climate, that spending level represents an

approximately 5-percent decrease from FY 11 and a 14-percent cut from FY 10, at a time when investments in diplomacy and development are critical.

The bill contains a total of \$13.2 billion in funding for operational costs for the State Department and approximately \$1.3 billion for USAID operating expenses. The final number for USAID operating expenses was below the request, but encouraging in that it was far above a House proposed cut that would have imperiled several initiatives. A separate appropriations bill signed into law in November funded the Foreign Commercial Service at \$270 million and the Foreign Agricultural Service at \$176 million. The Foreign Commercial Service appropriated number was above what it may have been, and AFSA was directly engaged in that outcome. As AFSA has contributed to the larger debate on foreign affairs spending, we have focused on the “people” side of the budget and on making arguments to protect essential Foreign Service accounts, including resources for more and better professional education and training enabled by an adequate “training float.” The threat to eliminate Overseas Comparability Pay, automatically slashing 16 percent of Foreign Service base pay for members serving overseas, was real and dire. While we are pleased that the current level has been preserved, we remain committed to seeking full implementation of OCP at the Washington, D.C., rate.

AFSA’s goal is nonstop, intelligent advocacy for diplomacy, development and the Foreign Service. The cuts to international affairs spending are less than feared and diplomacy and development have fared better than many expected. We wish to offer special thanks to many of you who have offered suggestions and feedback to aid our advocacy for the Foreign Service. Best wishes to all for a peaceful, joyous and safe holiday season and New Year.



Susan R. Johnson

AFSA President