

An hourglass-shaped graphic with a globe in the top bulb and another globe in the bottom bulb. The top bulb is dark blue, and the bottom bulb is light blue. The hourglass stem is light blue. The globe in the top bulb is dark blue, and the globe in the bottom bulb is light blue. The hourglass is centered on the page.

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*Legislative Branch Appropriations Bill: Structure, Content,
and Process*

Lorraine H. Tong, Analyst in American National Government

December 23, 2008

Abstract. The legislative branch appropriations bill is one of the regular appropriations bills that Congress considers each year. It provides budget authority to spend specified amounts of money for expenditures of the legislative branch for the fiscal year, including staff salaries. This bill funds the operations not only of Congress itself but also of its support agencies and other entities within the legislative branch. Salaries for Members of Congress are not included in the annual bill, but are funded automatically each year in a permanent appropriations account.

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Congressional Operations and Related Agencies

Effective in FY2003, Congress restructured the legislative branch appropriations bill so that Title I contains entities that include the House of Representatives, Senate, Joint Items, Capitol Police, Congressional Budget Office, Library of Congress (including the Congressional Research Service), Architect of the Capitol, Government Accountability Office (formerly named the General Accounting Office), Government Printing Office, Office of Compliance, Open World Leadership Program, and John C. Stennis Center for Public Service. Typically, Title II contains general provisions. Occasionally, the legislative branch bill might contain additional titles for special provisions. Previously, from the late 1970s until FY2003, the bill was divided into two titles: one covered entities that directly supported Congress (Title I: Congressional Operations), and the other covered those that did not exclusively, or almost exclusively, support Congress (Title II: Related Agencies).

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Since October 1, 2008, the legislative branch has been funded at the FY2008 budget level under a continuing resolution covering nine regular appropriations bills through March 6, 2009 (H.R. 2638, P.L. 110-329). For FY2008, a total of \$3.97 billion was provided for the legislative branch. The FY2009 request was \$4.66 billion, or about an 18% increase over the FY2008 enacted amount. The House and Senate accounts include budget authority for salaries and other expenses for Member offices, leadership offices, officers and their employees, and committees. Although the legislative branch appropriations bill funds committees annually on a fiscal year basis, each chamber authorizes its committees (except House Appropriations, Senate Appropriations, and Senate Ethics) for two years at a time through resolutions adopted near the beginning of each Congress. The Joint Items account funds the expenses and salaries of the joint committees, the Office of the Attending Physician, the Capitol Guide and Special Services Office, and the preparation of statements of appropriations. Since FY2003, the Capitol Police has been funded under its own separate account, "Capitol Police."

On occasion, supplemental appropriations have been provided to accommodate specific purposes, activities, or unanticipated expenditures.

Appropriation Process

The President proposes spending levels for most annual general appropriations bills that fund activities of executive branch agencies in the President's annual budget, which is submitted by the first Monday in February (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)). However, the House and Senate, including the leadership and the Appropriations Committees, and legislative support agencies develop estimates for the legislative branch entities. The President subsequently presents, without changes in the budget request, the proposed funding levels for the legislative branch submission (31 U.S.C. 1105). The House and Senate Subcommittees on the Legislative Branch each hold hearings at which the heads of legislative entities and the respective chamber's administrative officers explain their requests and answer questions.

The House Appropriations Committee, which traditionally originates appropriations bills, reports a legislative branch appropriations bill that includes funding for the House only, Joint Items, and other legislative branch entities. The House leaves the Senate to determine funding levels for its own operations in the bill.

The Senate Appropriations Committee recommends alterations in funding levels for Joint Items and other legislative branch entities, but customarily makes no revisions in House items. Any differences between House and Senate versions may be reconciled between the two chambers. The President almost always signs the legislative branch bill as passed by the House and Senate.

Permanent Budget Authority; Trust Funds

Legislative branch permanent appropriations and trust funds are not included in the legislative branch appropriations act. Permanent appropriations are made available in the amounts necessary for the purposes specified as the result of previously enacted legislation, and do not require annual action. These permanent appropriations include compensation of Members, congressional use of foreign currencies, and Library of Congress payments to copyright owners.

Trust funds are monies held in accounts credited with collections from sources specified by law for defined purposes. Trust funds include gifts and donations to the Library of Congress and funds held by the U.S. Capitol Preservation Commission.

Table 1 presents the various accounts for the FY2008 enacted and FY2009 requested amounts.

Table 1. Legislative Branch Appropriations, FY2008 and FY2009
(in thousands of dollars)

Entity	FY2008 Enacted	FY2009 Requested
Title I: Legislative Branch Appropriations		
Senate	831,757	940,897
House of Representatives	1,182,835	1,333,861
Joint Items	23,001	29,341
Capitol Police	281,872	333,654
Office of Compliance	3,342	4,308
Congressional Budget Office	37,306	42,740
Architect of the Capitol	413,471	642,664
Library of Congress, including Congressional Research Service	563,049	606,164
Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress	(102,344)	(107,323)
Government Printing Office	124,688	174,354
Government Accountability Office	499,748	538,152
Open World Leadership Program	8,978	13,900
Stennis Center for Public Service	429	430
Title II: General Provisions	0	0
Total Legislative Branch, Titles I and II	3,970,476	4,660,465

Source: House Committee on Appropriations, Office of Management and Budget, *Analytical Perspectives, Budget of the United States Government, FY2009, Table 28—Federal Programs by Agency and Account* (Washington: GPO, 2008) and Office of Management and Budget, *Summary Tables, Budget of the United States, FY2009, Table S – 3. Discretionary Funding by Major Agency* (Washington: GPO, 2008) p. 141, P.L. 110-161, and the statement of David Obey in the *Congressional Record* (daily edition), vol. 153, Dec. 17, 2007, pp. H16371-H16380.

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