

## Stop-gap funding bill signed into law

Congress this week approved and President Biden signed a “clean” short-term continuing resolution (H.R. 5305) that funds the federal government at fiscal year 2021 levels through December 3 of this year, averting a partial shutdown that otherwise would have occurred when FY 2021 ended at midnight on September 30.

As originally approved in the House on September 21, H.R. 5305 called for extending government funding through December 3, providing supplemental appropriations to aid victims of recent US natural disasters and assist in the resettlement of Afghan refugees, and suspending the federal debt limit through December 16, 2022. Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., attempted to bring it to the floor on September 27; but that effort failed in the face of a promised filibuster from Senate Republicans, who objected to a further suspension of the debt limit. Breaking a filibuster requires a three-fifths supermajority – typically 60 votes – and Democrats were unable to convince any of their GOP colleagues to break ranks and support advancing the House measure. (See separate coverage in this issue for additional discussion about the debt limit.)

Senators subsequently amended the bill to strip out the debt ceiling language and approved it on September 30 by a vote of 65-35. The Senate-approved version – including only the short-term funding extension plus the supplemental appropriations for disaster relief and refugee resettlement – was quickly sent back to the House where it was passed the same day by a vote of 254-175. President Biden signed it into law that evening.

With a funding patch in place, lawmakers have additional time to complete and pass the 12 spending bills needed to fund government operations for fiscal year 2022, which began October 1. But the temporary extension also sets the stage for a possible fiscal standoff in early December if the two chambers are unable to agree on a long-term spending plan in the coming weeks.

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