



2026 MIDTERM ELECTION OUTLOOK: **APPROPRIATIONS**



ANALYSIS BY

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OVERVIEW: *A Committee in Flux*

Appropriations should be one of the central post-election areas to watch. Control matters, but the members and committee make up matter just as much. The committee process is already under strain from narrow margins, repeated funding fights, and unusually high turnover.

That churn is especially important on the Appropriations Committees.

AT LEAST 69 MEMBERS of Congress are not running for re-election in 2026 — including 58 House members & 11 Senators — the most since 2000.

1/3 OF HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS REPUBLICANS may not return next Congress when retirements, Senate bids, and competitive races are taken together.

— Roll Call

Churn will create new blood on a highly sought after committee. New cardinals, new subcommittee members, and new leadership dynamics create openings for clients to educate members early, shape account-level priorities, and build relationships before the next funding cycle hardens.



IF THE HOUSE FLIPS

Appropriations will continue to be one of the most important committees in Congress. If the Democrats take the House, Rep. Rosa DeLauro would be expected to take the gavel, and that matters. She has more than 30 years of experience on the committee and knows how to use the gavel both to secure funding priorities and to draw sharp contrasts with a Republicans and the Trump administration.

ISSUES TO WATCH:

Oversight through funding bills. A Democratic House would is expected to use the appropriations process bills to limit, direct, and expose administration actions. Expect more riders, report language, account-level restrictions, and hearings focused on health care, labor, education, energy and water, Interior/environment, and accounts tied to Trump administration priorities. This is also where Democrats are likely to put guardrails around Trump-linked priorities, including high-profile projects like the ballroom or reflecting pool, as part of a broader effort to spotlight possible favoritism, misuse of funds, or corruption.

Community Project Funding would also be worth watching. A change in control could reopen or broaden project categories and eligible recipients, creating new opportunities in health, education, housing, community development and other domestic accounts.

MEMBER TO WATCH:



REP. ROSA DELAURO
D-CT

DeLauro has been in this role before and so she knows how to operate when Congress and the administration are at odds. She would likely be aggressive, thoughtful and serious. Expect the House process to be generally structured around Democratic priorities, member projects, and funding restrictions aimed at the administration.

OPPORTUNITY CREATED BY TURNOVER – ON BOTH SIDES OF THE AISLE.

The likely departure of senior appropriators and some subcommittee leaders creates room for newer members to move up and for clients to build early relationships with new Members who could become future cardinals.

On the Republican side, Rep. Mark Amodei's retirement opens a Homeland Security Appropriations slot, and other GOP appropriators are either running for other offices or in difficult races. Even in a Democratic House, the Republican bench matters because the committee still needs bipartisan relationships to get bills across the finish line.

On the Democratic side, the committee will lose Reps. Steny Hoyer and Bonnie Watson Coleman to retirements, and the party will also gain committee slots if they take the majority. So expect significant Member changes in the coming Congress.



IF BOTH CHAMBERS FLIP

If Democrats take both chambers, Appropriations becomes even more central. DeLauro in the House and Sen. Patty Murray in the Senate would be an experienced pair with a clear understanding of how to negotiate opposite a Trump White House. Murray is currently Vice Chair of Senate Appropriations. If Democrats take the Senate, she would be positioned to take the gavel.

ISSUES TO WATCH:

Health care funding and domestic discretionary spending.

Expect a push on hospitals, rural health, drug pricing, PBMs, medical research, labor, education, and child care.

Executive Branch Reach.

Democrats would also likely use appropriations to push back against executive branch actions they view as overreach.

2028 Messaging.

More broadly, expect Democrats to use the funding process to show how their policies help people deal with affordability and other challenges as they work to sharpen a 2028 message.

MEMBERS TO WATCH:



SEN. PATTY MURRAY
D-WA

Murray and DeLauro both have the benefit of experience. They know the Appropriations process, they have a strong working relationship, and they know how to operate opposite a Trump White House. That does not mean the process becomes easy. It does mean Democrats would have seasoned appropriators in both chambers who understand where to fight, where to cut a deal, and how to protect core priorities.



SEN. BRIAN SCHATZ
D-HI

Schatz is young by Senate standards, effective and well respected. He is not an appropriations cardinal in the same way Murray is, but he matters because Senate Democrats are moving toward a generational leadership transition. If he continues rising, the question is how his energy and communications instincts shape the caucus when appropriations, confirmations, and Trump oversight all collide.

OPPORTUNITIES CREATED BY TURNOVER:

Senate Appropriations Committee is also changing. Sen. Lindsey Graham's death removed a senior Republican appropriator and State-Foreign Operations voice, while Sen. Mitch McConnell's retirement creates another major opening on the Republican side. Those departures will have an impact on defense, foreign operations, earmarks, and state-specific spending. **New members on Senate Appropriations will need to build issue expertise quickly, creating an opening for clients with clear, district- or state-tied funding priorities.**



IF NEITHER FLIPS

If Republicans hold the House and Senate, expect more of the same: narrow margins, a difficult floor, and a sputtering appropriations process. Rep. Tom Cole's committee has been productive at the committee level, including reporting all 12 FY27 bills before the end of June. The challenge has been, and likely will remain, finding the votes on the House floor and reconciling House GOP demands with what can pass the Senate.

ISSUES TO WATCH:

The immediate question of how to fund the country comes before the next Congress. FY27 funding is likely to remain unresolved before the election. Full-year CRs are historically uncommon, so the more important signal will be the length of the next funding extension to determine how much more time Congress thinks they need: a short CR keeps a year-end package in play, while an extension into February or March would hand the appropriations fight - including thousands of member projects - to the next Congress.

Defense spending and topline fights. Reconciliation remains the most likely vehicle for major partisan policy. That is not ideal for health care and hospitals if Republicans look for savings from Medicaid, ACA subsidies, or provider-related accounts. Defense discretionary spending is in a stronger position and continues to have bipartisan, bicameral support. Non-defense spending will remain under pressure from topline fights and the right flank.

Community Project Funding would likely continue to favor the current account structure, with particularly strong opportunities for infrastructure, water, rural facilities, public safety and other capital projects.

MEMBERS TO WATCH:



REP. TOM COLE
R-OK

Cole stays central if Republicans hold the House. An institutionalist with a difficult conference, and term limits leave him little runway, so succession is a real question. Republican oversight would be targeted; a Democratic House, far more adversarial.



REP. MARIO DÍAZ-BALART
R-FL

Díaz-Balart is the obvious successor to watch. Vice Chair of Appropriations and chair of the National Security, State, and Related Programs Subcommittee, with a serious appropriations profile. If Republicans hold the House, his positioning as Cole's number two becomes a major committee storyline.

OPPORTUNITIES:

If Republicans hold, turnover may matter even more because the GOP side of House Appropriations is facing a real reshuffle. Amodei's retirement opens a cardinal slot, and additional departures or losses could create several new subcommittee opportunities. **That creates a window for clients to engage members who are moving up the appropriations ladder before they fully define their priorities.**

BOTTOM LINE

Control matters in Appropriations, but so do timing and committee membership. The first major decision comes before the new Congress: whether lawmakers use the post-election period to finish FY27 funding or push the fight into 2027. Full-year CRs remain relatively rare, meaning a larger year-end or early-year spending package should remain part of the discussion even with limited floor progress to date.

After that, the election determines who writes the next set of rules. A Democratic House would likely put greater emphasis on non-defense priorities and could broaden the universe of Community Project Funding opportunities. If Republicans hold, expect greater continuity in the current CPF structure and continued emphasis on infrastructure, water, rural development, public safety and other capital projects. In either scenario, turnover on the Appropriations Committees creates openings for clients to build relationships with the members who will determine both how much gets spent and what is eligible to compete for it.

MONUMENT'S APPROPRIATIONS PRACTICE AREA

This analysis is brought to you courtesy of Monument Advocacy's Appropriations policy experts.

OUR APPROPRIATIONS TEAM:



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The appropriations process is complex, compressed, and often difficult to read from the outside. Whether you are a community seeking congressionally directed spending, a company trying to shape report language, or an organization working to protect funding under threat, success requires more than understanding the process. It requires knowing where decisions are actually being made, who needs to hear from you, and when to engage.

We help clients assess where they stand, identify the right funding path, build support with committees and agencies, solve problems before they become dead ends, and secure meaningful engagement with the decision-makers who shape outcomes.

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