

# APPROPRIATIONS UPDATE

December  
8th, 2025

## Second Minibus Unlikely Before the Holiday Recess

While congressional appropriators are projecting confidence that they'll knock out a second tranche 3-5 of funding bills before the January 30th deadline set in last month's continuing resolution, it's increasingly unlikely that they'll vote on another spending package before the upcoming holiday recess due to procedural and political headwinds.

In the Senate, advancing such a package requires unanimous consent due to procedural rules. That consent is being blocked by a handful of conservatives objecting to the inclusion of billions in earmarks, which they say violates the self-imposed ban on earmarks. Fiscal hawks like Senators Mike Lee (R-UT), Rick Scott (R-FL), and Ron Johnson (R-WI) met with Thune this week to lay out what it would take to drop their objections. Majority Leader Thune (R-SD) has commented that stripping earmarks is a nonstarter. Their demands extend beyond earmarks: Lee has also raised concerns about authorizing language he argues was "smuggled" into the Interior-Environment bill without proper committee consultation, and the group is pushing for consideration of Johnson's Shutdown Fairness Act to guarantee pay for essential workers during lapses in funding.

The list of holds on the bill continues to evolve. Thune has been working to chip away at objections, with Sen. Josh Hawley (R-MO) recently withdrawing his hold after securing AI-related language. But Scott has maintained that House provisions blocking federal funding for abortion procedures and gender-affirming surgeries in the HHS bill must remain intact.

In addition to the policy disputes, leadership appears to recognize the time crunch: there are only about 10 legislative days left before the recess, and negotiating, reconciling, and whipping votes on such a large package under those constraints would be extremely challenging. The ongoing demands from fiscal conservatives add further delay to an already tight schedule. With the two chambers being in session at different times for 2 of the 4 weeks next month, they'll have to move quickly on the remaining 9 appropriations bills to avoid a full-year CR or another shutdown.