APPROPRIATIONS UPDATE

Nov. 9th, 2026

Murkowski Positions for Top Republican Appropriations Role

Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) plans to seek the top Republican position on the Senate Appropriations Committee next Congress, a transition that could elevate energy, natural resources, and climate resilience priorities in federal spending negotiations. Following Chair Susan Collins' (R-ME) reelection defeat, Murkowski is positioned to become the committee's most senior Republican, although Sen. Jerry Moran (R-KS) could challenge her. Murkowski brings more than 15 years as the top Republican on the Interior-Environment Appropriations Subcommittee and a record of bipartisan collaboration. Her recent comments highlighting Alaska's energy costs and vulnerability to extreme weather offer an indication of the priorities she could bring to the broader committee.

With Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA) expected to become chair, the two senators' strong working relationship could help advance bipartisan spending agreements and reinforce congressional authority over the administration's use of appropriated funds. Their potential partnership could be particularly consequential as lawmakers confront efforts to withhold approved funding.

Little Momentum for Another Party-Line Package

A third Republican reconciliation bill appears increasingly unlikely during the lame duck, with little evidence of the coordination needed to move a major party-line package before Democrats take control of Congress. Senate Budget Chair Ron Johnson (R-WI) said he is prepared to begin work but has received virtually no engagement from congressional leadership or the White House on its substance or strategy. While administration officials have expressed support for another package, that interest has yet to translate into an agreed agenda or a clear path to passage. With limited floor time and substantial work required to draft legislation, navigate reconciliation rules, and secure Republican votes, the window is rapidly closing.