

Congress' Growing To-Do List Causes Paralysis

Despite efforts to avoid controversial issues during an election year, Congress has been thrown into the middle of several domestic and international crises that have no simple solutions. As the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) shutdown enters its second month and airport security lines grow, Democrats and Republicans are under increasing pressure to find a compromise. While new DHS leadership may encourage negotiations, TSA, FEMA, and other DHS personnel continue to work without pay.

Military operations in Iran have begun to dominate the legislative calendar as the Trump Administration prepares a \$200 billion funding request to sustain U.S. military efforts. Despite many pending bipartisan reauthorizations this year (e.g., the [*Stem Cell Therapeutic and Research Reauthorization Act*](#) that expires in September), the Senate's calendar is jammed by the [*SAVE America Act*](#) (the Safeguard American Voted Eligibility Act), which President Trump insists Congress pass before he considers signing any other legislation into law.

Meanwhile, Congress still awaits the Administration's Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 budget proposal to officially kick off its appropriations season. It is likely that the President's FY27 budget will be less controversial than his FY26 request where, in addition to a proposed restructuring and consolidation of HHS, called for a 40-percent funding reduction to NIH and a 26-percent funding cut to HHS overall.

Given that neither the House nor the Senate entertained the Trump Administration's FY26 request to cut and/or restructure HHS, as well as a bipartisan, bicameral preference to avoid a full government shutdown ahead of November's mid-term elections, the FY27 appropriations process may be more muted than last year. Regardless, HHS will continue to pursue controversial policy decisions and initiatives that will prompt Congressional Committees to summon HHS leaders to testify to try to maintain some degree of oversight over the Administration.



Waning public opinion of the current state of things may prompt more Congressional Republicans to privately and publicly push back on the Trump Administration's policy agenda, especially on the campaign trail. While Congressional Republicans are largely on the defensive on most legislative issues going into November, the burden of opportunity to take back the House and possibly the Senate in November rests with Democrats.

Expect a summer full of local campaign signs and slogans as policymakers take to the campaign trail as much as possible. Look for more information soon on how ASTCT members can engage with their lawmakers via site visits during the summer campaign months. Learn more about ASTCT Payer and Government Relations activities, and how you can get involved, on [ASTCT's Advocacy webpage](#) or contact [Molly Ford](#), ASTCT's Director of Government and Payer Relations.

