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This Week in Congress!

Congress returned this week with a packed agenda centered on FY2026 appropriations, including funding for the Department of Homeland Security, immigration enforcement, and defense. Republican leaders are moving to advance President Trump's funding request through the budget reconciliation process, facing internal divisions, a June 1 deadline, and expected Democratic opposition. Homeland Security funding could be folded into a single reconciliation bill, with additional Republican priorities addressed separately.

In the House, lawmakers advanced legislation on environmental regulation, aviation safety, disaster relief, and tax policy, while also debating foreign policy and immigration measures.

The Senate resumed consideration of election legislation, war powers, and Trump administration nominees.

FY 2026 DHS Appropriations

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) continues to not be fully funded. On April 1, President Trump asked Congress for a reconciliation bill by June 1 to fund ICE and CBP, implying support for the Senate-passed Homeland Security appropriations bill which the House GOP leaders had resisted voting on before recess.

Senate Majority Leader Thune and House Speaker Johnson plan to fund DHS via both bipartisan appropriations and partisan reconciliation. Democrats back the Senate bill and seek immigration enforcement reforms, while Republicans favor the reconciliation bill, which few Democrats will support. Procedurally, the Senate repassed its partial DHS funding on April 2, but House Republicans are waiting for reconciliation progress before voting. This delay could stall DHS funding for months. President Trump's April 3 Executive Order ensured DHS employees were paid, reducing urgency for immediate legislative action.

Reconciliation 2.0

President Trump has called for the next budget reconciliation process to be fast and focused. Republican leaders, including Leader Thune and Speaker Johnson, emphasize that the bill should be narrowly streamlined, covering only three years of appropriations for DHS immigration enforcement and border security. They argue that funding for agencies that would otherwise be supported through regular appropriations should not require revenue offsets.

Budget reconciliation, authorized by the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Act of 1974, allows Congress to pass tax, spending, and debt-limit legislation in the Senate by a simple majority instead of the usual 60-vote threshold. Strict rules limit what may be included. Republicans could pursue two reconciliation bills this year, one for FY 2026 and one for FY 2027.

Not all Republicans agree on the approach. The House Freedom Caucus wants multi-year DHS funding, while others see reconciliation as a vehicle for war supplemental funding, election security measures, or other priorities. Adding too many provisions risks collapsing the process, especially given high costs: FY 2026 ICE and CBP funding alone was estimated at \$28 billion, and the administration's FY 2027 DOD proposal seeks \$350

billion via reconciliation. Budget hawks may push for revenue offsets, while moderates could resist spending cuts ahead of the midterms.

Republican leaders aim to pass a narrow Reconciliation 2.0 bill now, with a broader Reconciliation 3.0 later, though timing challenges remain, as any third reconciliation cannot begin before October. President Trump wants the next bill enacted by June 1—just seven weeks away—despite the average reconciliation process historically taking nearly six months. Previous fast-track examples include a 28-day Republican bill in 2001 and a 34-day Democratic bill in 2021.

The Senate is expected to move first. Leader Thune plans a floor vote on a budget resolution by month's end, which is required in both chambers to initiate reconciliation.

FY 2027 Appropriations

On April 3, the White House released the President's discretionary budget request, proposing a 44% increase in defense spending and a 10% decrease in non-defense discretionary spending. The president's budget is mostly symbolic and rarely influences Congressional appropriations.

This month, the House Appropriations Committee will begin marking up spending bills, starting with Military Construction-Veterans Affairs and Financial Services-General Government, beginning the process earlier than in recent years.

SAVE America Act

The Senate recently rejected an amendment to require photo ID for federal elections, with the bill debate set to continue. On March 31, President Trump signed an executive order enforcing stricter mail-in voting rules and directing states to identify eligible voters; Democrats have filed a lawsuit against its enforcement.

Congressional Balance of Power

Last week, Georgia Republican Clay Fuller secured victory in a special election to fill the House seat vacated by former Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene (R), who resigned in early January. Upon Fuller's swearing in, the House will comprise 218 Republicans and 213 Democrats, granting the Republicans a two-vote majority.

Meanwhile, two members of the House submitted their resignations at the same time on the same day - both for sexual misconduct. Without fanfare, the resignation letters of Rep. Eric Swalwell (D-CA) and Rep. Tony Gonzales (R-TX) were read to an almost empty House chamber on Tuesday afternoon. The pressure is now shifting to two lawmakers from Florida: Rep. Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick (D-FL) and Rep. Cory Mills (R-FL). While the Cherfilus-McCormick case is all about rank corruption, the Mills matter is about sexual misconduct - with a splash of corruption added in.