

☀️ AM: The appropriations mess rolls on

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Congress drops the ball on annual spending bills — again

Happy Wednesday morning.

With the **Senate** about to leave for the August recess, we wanted to take stock of where Congress is on the annual appropriations process.

The short answer? It's a mess. Again.

The House has only passed five of the 12 FY2025 spending bills. House Republicans have pursued a party-line strategy of pushing for huge spending cuts and culture-war policy riders instead of working with Democrats, the Senate or the White House. That bolstered Speaker **Mike Johnson** and the House GOP leaders in the short term but led nowhere on the spending front.

The Senate Appropriations Committee will have approved 11 of the 12 funding bills by the time senators skip town tomorrow, all with overwhelming bipartisan support. But none of these bills have been to the floor yet. Senate appropriators also agreed to spend \$34 billion more than what was called for under last year's spending deal, leaving a huge gulf with House Republicans.

When lawmakers return to Washington in September, they'll have just a handful of legislative days to figure out how to avert a government shutdown at the end of the month. The prevailing view is that both chambers will pass a stopgap running through mid-December, potentially with a disaster relief supplemental riding alongside it. None of this has been ironed out yet, of course.

Despite calls from lawmakers in both parties to fix the appropriations process,

not a single individual spending bill has cleared both chambers. If there's divided government again next year, it could be just as bad — or even worse. And there's the debt limit to worry about in December, ahead of the Jan. 2 deadline.

Let's start with the Senate. The top GOP appropriator, Sen. **Susan Collins** of Maine, told us she wants the end-of-September stopgap to only cover the funding bills that both chambers are unable to pass in September.

"I really think the emphasis needs to be on getting the regular appropriations bills passed rather than on doing a huge CR," Collins said.

However, it's highly unlikely that any of the FY2025 spending bills will be conferenced, approved by both chambers and signed into law by Sept. 30.

On top of that, Collins confirmed the lone funding bill that won't clear the Senate Appropriations panel by the end of this week — the Homeland Security bill — has been delayed while lawmakers evaluate whether the Secret Service needs extra money in light of the attempted assassination of former President **Donald Trump**.

Of course, the DHS funding bill has always been one of the most politically sensitive of the bunch given the immigration and border security elements. So it was going to be difficult no matter what.

House "charade": The big complaint we hear from GOP senators is that Senate Majority Leader **Chuck Schumer** isn't prioritizing appropriations bills for floor time. But Democrats counter that the Senate's committee-level process is bipartisan and House Republicans shouldn't get credit for jamming through partisan bills.

"The charade the House does on appropriations is meaningless. They're involved in a contest to see how far right they can move the bills," said Sen. **Chris Murphy** (D-Conn.), a senior appropriator. "When our bills come out of committee, they are fully baked, bipartisan deals."

This is true, but it means that all 100 senators don't have a chance to shape the final product. That can only be done on the floor. Murphy did acknowledge that the entire process is broken and "needs to be rewritten from the ground up," adding that the current way of doing business is a "giant gift to leadership."

OK, what's the point of having a committee process if the bills won't come to the floor? Senate Minority Whip **John Thune**, who's running to succeed **Mitch McConnell** as GOP leader and is promising an appropriations overhaul, faulted Schumer for this but said the current Senate process is better than the alternative.

Here's Thune on the Senate's committee-level process:

| "If we aren't moving individual bills by the Sept. 30 deadline, whatever we end

up with — whether it's some minibuses or a big bill at the end — at least there's been a process. And I think it's important, the more process there is, the more defensible it is when you get to the result or the outcome.

“But I think if you don't have a process, then it looks like it was just cobbled together in Schumer's office. And that's not a good outcome.”

While there's general agreement that a September CR should run until December, what happens after that depends largely on the election outcome.

Some senior lawmakers, such as House Appropriations Committee Chair **Tom Cole** (R-Okla.), think it would be better to spare the next president and incoming Congress from a shutdown threat early in 2025. Yet it probably won't be his decision to make.

“**The winner** of the next election probably makes a decision [and] tells their side ‘I want a deal, I don't want to have to deal with a government shutdown coming in,’” Cole said. “But if they want to have it kicked into next year so they can deal with it, I think they can make that call.”

— *Andrew Desiderio, Jake Sherman and John Bresnahan*