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Our final (fourth) look at the 115th Congress shows how every member of the House and Senate voted on such key issues as a carbon tax (House), tax cuts (House), and farm and food programs (Senate).

Farm and Food Programs

Constitutional Vote: No | Vote Cast: --

This bill (H.R. 2) would reauthorize and extend federal farm and nutrition programs through fiscal 2023, including crop subsidies, conservation, rural development and agricultural trade programs, and the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (aka food stamps). The Congressional Budget Office estimates that direct spending on agricultural and nutrition programs under this bill would total \$867 billion over 10 years. And according to an article in The Hill entitled "Once again, the farm bill is stuffed with food stamps" (May 14, 2018), "roughly 80 percent of the [Farm] bill's annual budget is earmarked for food stamps." This bill would also reauthorize a whole variety of other agricultural and nutritional programs, as well as allow industrial hemp to be grown in the United States, subject to strict state regulation.

The Senate passed H.R. 2 on June 28, 2018 by a vote of 86 to 11 (Roll Call 143). We have assigned pluses to the nays because the Constitution does not authorize the federal government to subsidize food or agriculture. Moreover, food subsidies have done little to lift people out of poverty, and farm subsidies have caused market distortions as the government essentially picks winners and losers in the food production industry.

NATO

Constitutional Vote: No | Vote Cast: --

During consideration of the Defense authorization bill (H.R. 5515), Senator Jack Reed (D-R.I.) moved that Senate members in the House-Senate conference committee insist that the final version of the bill reaffirm the commitment of the United States to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) military alliance. Under the North Atlantic Treaty establishing NATO, member nations "agree that an armed attack against one or more of them ... shall be considered an attack against them all."

The Senate agreed to Reed's motion on July 10, 2018 by a vote of 97 to 2 (Roll Call 149). We have assigned pluses to the nays not only because the United States should stay clear of entangling alliances such as NATO, but also because the NATO provision that obligates the United States to go to war if any member of NATO is attacked undermines the provision in the U.S. Constitution that assigns to Congress the power to declare war.

Spending Cuts

Constitutional Vote: Yes | Vote Cast: --

During consideration of the Interior, Environment, Financial Services, and General Government Appropriations Act for 2019 (H.R. 6147), Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.) introduced an amendment to cut funding in each of the bill's divisions by 11.39 percent. The purpose (in the words of the amendment) is "to reduce the amounts appropriated to comply with the spending limits under the Budget Control Act of 2011."

The Senate rejected Paul's amendment on July 25, 2018 by a vote of 25 to 74 (Roll Call 171). We have assigned pluses to the yeas because the federal government needs to start reining in climbing federal spending (and deficits) somewhere in order to avert fiscal disaster.

Appropriations for Interior-Environment, Treasury, and Transportation-HUD

Constitutional Vote: No | Vote Cast: --

This bill (H.R. 6147) would provide \$154.2 billion in discretionary funding for fiscal 2019 to various departments and agencies, including \$35.9 billion for the Interior Department, the EPA, and related agencies; \$23.7 billion for the Treasury Department; \$23.2 billion for the Agriculture Department and related agencies; and \$71.4 billion for the departments of Transportation and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and related agencies.

The Senate passed H.R. 6147 on August 1, 2018 by a vote of 92 to 6 (Roll Call 180). We have assigned pluses to the nays because much of the spending falls outside the federal government's constitutionally delegated powers. The unconstitutional spending includes federal social-welfare programs such as food and farm subsidies and housing subsidies (under HUD). Also, lumping multiple appropriations bills together, as opposed to voting on them separately, reduces lawmakers' accountability.

Planned Parenthood

Constitutional Vote: Yes | Vote Cast: --

During consideration of the appropriations bill for Health and Human Services and other federal departments including Defense (H.R. 6157), Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.), introduced an amendment to prohibit federal funding of Planned Parenthood.

The Senate rejected Senator Paul's amendment on August 23, 2018 by a vote of 45 to 48 (Roll Call 191). We have assigned pluses to the yeas because Planned Parenthood is the nation's largest abortion provider, and government should not subsidize the killing of innocent human life. Moreover, under the Constitution, the federal government should not be subsidizing any private entity in the marketplace.

Opioid Abuse Prevention and Health Programs

Constitutional Vote: No | Vote Cast: --

This bill (H.R. 6) would modify Medicare and Medicaid in relation to opioid abuse. It would authorize \$500 million annually, for fiscal 2019 through fiscal 2021, for opioid-response grants to states and tribes. It would authorize \$10 million annually, for fiscal 2019 through fiscal 2023, for the establishment and operation of opioid recovery centers. It would also authorize the creation of an Office of National Drug Control Policy and require a study on Medicaid drug review and utilization requirements. A Senate amendment to the bill would remove provisions allowing Medicaid reimbursements for residential substance-abuse facilities.

The Senate passed H.R. 6 on September 17, 2018 by a vote of 99 to 1 (Roll Call 210). We have assigned pluses to the nay because Medicare and Medicaid are both unconstitutional programs. The U.S. Constitution gives no authority to the federal government to pay people's medical expenses, no matter how poor or disabled they are. Such assistance should be handled by states, charity, or the free market. Any expansion of Medicare or Medicaid, which is what this bill authorizes, should be voted against.

Appropriations for Defense, Labor-HHS-Education, and Continuing Appropriations

Constitutional Vote: No | Vote Cast: --

Cost per Family: \$10,403

This bill (H.R. 6157) would provide \$855.1 billion in discretionary funding for fiscal 2019, including \$674.4 billion for the Defense Department (including \$67.9 billion in overseas contingency operations, i.e., Iraq, Afghanistan, etc.), \$90.3 billion for the Health and Human Services Department, \$71.4 billion for the Education Department, \$12.1 billion for the Labor Department, and continuing appropriations for all of the remaining federal government departments not explicitly funded by this bill until December 7, 2018.

The Senate adopted the final version of the bill (the conference report) on September 18, 2018 by a vote of 93 to 7 (Roll Call 212). We have assigned pluses to the nays because social-welfare spending falls outside the enumerated powers of the federal government, and lumping multiple appropriations bills into one mega-bill reduces lawmakers' accountability to their constituents. Moreover, even though defense spending is constitutional, the "defense" budget is bloated with funding for overseas military operations that have not contributed to the defense of our own country.

FAA Reauthorization and Supplemental Disaster Appropriations

Constitutional Vote: No | Vote Cast: --

Cost per Family: \$13,168

This bill (H.R. 302) would reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration through fiscal year 2023, with annual authorizations for federal aviation programs increasing from \$10.2 billion in fiscal 2018 to \$11.6 billion in fiscal 2023. It also eases restrictions on FAA regulation of drones, authorizes the federal Transportation Security Administration (TSA), and includes \$1.7 billion for Hurricane Florence disaster relief.

The Senate passed the bill on October 3, 2018 by a vote of 93 to 6 (Roll Call 220). We have assigned pluses to the nays because of the bill's unconstitutional federal overreach in both aviation and disaster relief. One example of this overreach is the TSA, which is known for groping and violating air travelers in the name of providing security. Instead of relying on an inefficient federal bureaucracy, security should be provided by the airlines, which have a vested interest in keeping their customers safe. Another area the feds should stay out of is the regulation of private-sector drones, which instead should be managed by local ordinances or (at most) state laws. And the market, not the feds, should determine such issues as the dimensions of seats on passenger airliners. Regarding disaster relief, this should be handled by private charitable efforts, not the federal government.

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Short-Term Health Insurance Plans

Constitutional Vote: No | Vote Cast: --

This measure (Senate Joint Resolution 63) would nullify and disapprove of the rule from the Departments of Treasury, Labor, and Health and Human Services that would expand the duration of short-term health-insurance plans. Short-term health-insurance plans, which are not required to follow federal health-insurance regulations — such as guaranteed issue, guaranteed renewability, and coverage of essential benefits — are very affordable and can be purchased at any time (i.e., not subject to enrollment periods). “Short-term” originally meant up to one year, but was reduced to three months under the Obama administration to increase enrollment in ObamaCare. The Trump administration sought to restore the original definition of “short-term” to up to one year. S.J. Res. 63, sponsored by left-wing Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.), seeks to stop this Trump administration “deregulation.”

The Senate rejected S. J. Res. 63 on October 10, 2018 by a vote of 50 to 50 (Roll Call 226). We have assigned pluses to the nays because easing federal regulations is always a good thing, especially in this case since the federal government has no constitutional authority to regulate health insurance in the first place. If people want to purchase “short-term” insurance that has less coverage, but is much more affordable, they should be allowed to do so. The federal government should stay out of healthcare, period.