

Welcome to the 119th Congress

Washington D.C. has been active since the new year and new Congress began, with substantial changes taking form at the national level. On the Hill, 75 new Members of Congress were sworn in on January 3, marking the beginning of the 119th Congress. One of Congress' newest members includes Senator Bernie Moreno (R-OH), a seat that was held by former Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH). Senator Moreno will serve on the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee; the Commerce, Science, and Transportation committee; Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs committee; Budget committee.

New Congressional Leadership

The Republicans held onto the majority in the House with a slightly smaller lead than the previous Congress. In the Senate, the majority switched from Democrats to Republicans, with leadership concordantly shifting. Senator John Thune (R-SD) is now Majority Leader and Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY) moved to Minority Leader.

The Senate Special Committee on Aging has new leadership, with Senator Rick Scott (R-NY) serving as Chair, and Senator Kristen Gillibrand (D-NY) as Ranking Member. The committee held their first hearing of the new Congress on January 15, titled "Improving Wellness Among Seniors: Setting a Standard for the American Dream," announcing four pillars of what should be secured for older adults:

- Their physical health;
- Financial security;
- A safe community to live in; and
- Family and community support.

Legislative Updates

On January 6, President Biden signed the bipartisan Social Security Fairness Act ([H.R.82](#)) into law, which will eliminate the reduction of Social Security benefits while entitled to public pensions from work not covered by Social Security. Representative Shontel Brown (D-OH), a cosponsor of this bill, noted that according to the Congressional Research Service, this will impact [approximately 230,000 Ohioans](#). The Social Security office [provides an overview of the law](#) and how it will impact beneficiaries.

Federal Funding

On December 21st, the final bill of the 118th Congress passed, another FY25 [Continuing Resolution](#) (CR). This CR holds federal funding at FY24 levels and extends the deadline to finalize FY25 funding to March 14th. At that time, Congress may choose to issue a year-long CR or finalize a FY25 funding package. A year-long CR runs the risk of triggering mandatory cuts outlined in the debt ceiling agreement.

On January 1, 2025, the federal government reached the debt limit, the maximum amount it is allowed to borrow. Congress will need to act to raise or suspend the limit in the coming months, and has until late Spring/early Summer until the government can no longer pay its bills.

Unfinished Legislation from 118th Congress

The process to reauthorize the Older Americans Act (OAA) starts anew in this new Congress. The bipartisan OAA Reauthorization bill ([S.4776](#)) passed the Senate, but the House failed to pass a final bill. The new Congress could choose to pick up S.4776 again or start from scratch

Other bills of interest that must be reintroduced in the new Congress are the Farm Bill, the Elder Justice Reauthorization and Modernization Act, the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act (TROA), and the Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) Act.