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## FY17 Budget Dance Begins In Earnest

Bowing to recent tradition in the era of extreme partisanship, lawmakers begin the periodic budget dance on a note of canceling the Easter-Passover recess unless progress is made on what remains of the FY 2017 budget cycle.

Congress has until April 28 before the current stopgap spending law expires, and lawmakers have done very little to resolve the spending impasse. Congress will have been in session for six straight weeks before departing for the two-week break April 6 -- six weeks of bickering over political ideologies, repealing Obamacare and dismantling the previous administration's actions while only paying lip service to the fundamentals of keeping the government operating.

As usual, the 11th hour jockeying for political position has lawmakers muttering shutdown if one side or the other fails to come out on top in the negotiations -- a shutdown four years from the date of the last closure and in an atmosphere where Republicans may take the shutdown bait laid by Democrats.

Why? The Trump administration has made it clear it wants to cut the size of government. A shutdown would give the administration leverage to assert that the policy of sending home "nonessential" employees, laying the ideal groundwork for a massive RIF -- or "reduction in force" -- in government jargon.

The administration initiated the first part of that groundwork last week when the Office of Personnel Management distributed its new handbook on reshaping the federal workforce -- *Workforce Reshaping Operations Handbook* -- a 111-page document describing how to trim a workforce with minimal fanfare.

While the remnants of the FY 2017 spending proposal -- the fiscal year will have reached its midway point before anything is accomplished -- likely won't address a RIF, the Trump administration's FY 2018 budget blueprint would, if enacted, likely result in a RIF for several agencies, particularly HUD, which the administration contends could function properly with half of its 8,500 member workforce.

Meanwhile, Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-WI) suggests lawmakers should remain in Washington until

they find a way to keep the government in operation past April 28. Gallagher's suggestion is unlikely to find much traction. That means Congress will have only eight days to reach a solution on spending.

Republicans, who generally receive the blame for government shutdowns, are trying to tamp down expectations over hardcore right wing demands for FY 2017 spending concessions by signaling the measure will not cut federal subsidies for Planned Parenthood or provide extra money to build the U.S./Mexico border wall.

Instead, House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) is promoting reconciliation to fund government through Sept. 30, a maneuver preventing a Senate filibuster on legislation that doesn't impact the federal debt. Congress likely will continue funding government at the FY 2016 level with some modifications to make it a legitimate FY 2017 budget rather than another continuing resolution.

But don't look for any acceptance of the Trump administration's proposed budget cuts for the current fiscal year. House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer (D-MD), the minority's official vote counter, made it clear Democrats won't accept spending cuts, meaning Republicans will have to reach some accommodation with Democrats in order to offset opposition from the rightwing House Freedom Caucus which has about three dozen members, sufficient to stymie the Republican leadership unless it has support from Democrats.

**Info:** See the administration's RIF plan at [www.cdpublications.com/docs/9129](http://www.cdpublications.com/docs/9129)

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