

insights

Omnibus

A large bill that is comprised of multiple smaller bills, usually on similar issues.

We're All in This (Bill) Together

The word "omnibus" is Latin for "for all" or "everybody." It has a similar meaning in modern American politics: today, an omnibus bill refers to a single bill that packages together multiple policy proposals. The most common omnibus bills are appropriations bills, where lawmakers assemble most or all [twelve](#) government funding bills into a massive spending package.

Signed, Sealed, Delivered

Though the term "omnibus" has become synonymous with appropriations bills, this was not always the case. One of the first omnibus bills passed by Congress was just prior to the Civil War. To address brewing conflicts between free and slave states, Senator Henry Clay (Whig-KY) introduced a series of resolutions in effort to broker a compromise. After Clay's resolutions failed, Congress formed his proposal into a five-bill package now known as the [Compromise of 1850](#).

Omnibus bills are still used for issues other than appropriations. Last year, a large coalition of Democrats led by the Black Maternal Health Caucus introduced the [Black Maternal Health Omnibus Act](#), which is comprised of a dozen bills introduced by Caucus members. Omnibus bills are becoming increasingly popular vehicles to pass legislation due to intensifying gridlock in Congress.

Omnibusbusiness

Passing appropriations bills using an omnibus used to be rare but has become the norm, though that still does not mean that the process runs on schedule. Congress is [currently working](#) to negotiate an omnibus appropriations package for FY2022 before government funding runs out on February 18, though Congress will likely extend that deadline yet again to March 11. Accordingly, the government is still operating under the final funding agreement signed by President Trump in December 2020. Appropriations leaders have expressed optimism that they will reach an agreement on a full omnibus package for FY2022 in the coming weeks, which would allow the Biden Administration to fund more of the President's policy and budget priorities. Last week, Congress finally announced topline appropriations spending numbers, which is another small but important step in completing the current year's appropriations.

If you have any questions about the appropriations process or how to get your priorities included, as has become one of the specialties of our practice, please reach out to us.

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