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HEALTH

## Friday Night Deal Leaves Some Agencies Quite Healthy

by Meghan McCarthy

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Not everyone is getting cut in the last-minute deal reached by Democrats and Republicans late on Friday.

Health and Human Services does suffer, with a \$4 billion reduction from 2010 levels laid out in the continuing resolution bill that Congress is slated to vote on this week.

But it's not all disastrous news. Some health agencies get more money. The Food and Drug Administration will get a \$107 million increase over fiscal 2010 levels, with additional funds going to a largely bipartisan food safety bill that passed in the 111th Congress after a series of high-profile food safety scandals, from contaminated peanut products to tainted spinach.

"Congress heard our message that a robust, well-funded FDA is essential for patients, consumers, and industry," said Nancy Bradish Myers, president of the Alliance for a Stronger FDA, a 180-member group that advocates for greater FDA funding.

A program funding AIDS drugs for about one in four people with HIV in the United States will get a \$25 million increase in fiscal

2011, \$8 million more than in the Republicans' original 2011 funding bill.

"While most of these programs will experience some reductions, they will be spared from the reckless cuts which would have had serious long-term impacts on the health and well-being of people living with HIV/AIDS and on efforts to prevent HIV infections in the future," said Carl Schmid, deputy executive director of The AIDS Institute.

One of the largest cuts in the HHS budget is a \$730 million reduction for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Health Resources and Services Administration, an agency within HHS that funds community health centers and family planning grants, is slated to get \$1.2 billion less than in 2010. But some HRSA programs also get funds through the health law, and the agency's discretion to spread cuts throughout individual programs might lessen the pain.

The National Institutes of Health will see a smaller reduction of \$260 million below the fiscal 2010 level, and the family planning grants that were a top target for Republicans will only be cut by \$17 million.

One of the mandatory cuts made by appropriators, trimming \$3.5 billion from performance bonuses paid to states for enrolling uninsured children in Medicaid, may not put the successful program in jeopardy, experts said.

"These are still significant cuts, but they are not as significant as they might've been," said Richard Hamburg, the deputy director for Trust for America's Health.

"Our big worry was the prevention fund, which seems to have survived for now," said Hamburg. The prevention fund is a \$17.75 billion mandatory account established in the health law, and has

become a top target for Republicans. The House is slated to consider legislation to strip the fund of its mandatory dollars this week.

Because the CDC's budget was cut below fiscal 2008 levels, the agency will likely be unable to use the prevention funds to supplant their budget. Language in the health law authorizing the fund only allows HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius to pull from the fund for other prevention programs above the fiscal 2008 level.

"Although the cut sounds alarming, we are actually not concerned," said Jocelyn Guyer, executive director of the Center for Children and Families at Georgetown University's Health Policy Institute.

"Even if every state won the highest award given out thus far, there would still be enough for each state to get a bonus," Guyer added.

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