

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-22-104701](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

In all but 3 of the last 46 fiscal years, Congress enacted a CR. This allowed federal agencies and programs to continue operations when Congress and the President had not reached agreement on and enacted their regular appropriations by the start of the federal fiscal year.

GAO was asked to review how CRs affect federal agencies and programs. This report describes (1) the history and characteristics of CRs for fiscal years 2010 through 2022 and (2) how selected agency and program operations and services to the public have been affected by CRs, as well as the actions taken to mitigate these effects.

GAO reviewed enacted CR legislation and selected agency- and program-specific documents. GAO selected three agencies and programs based on criteria such as whether they provide benefits and services to individuals with low incomes and receive the majority of their funds through discretionary, 1-year appropriations.

The three agencies and programs selected were USDA's Section 521 Rural Rental Assistance, Education's PBI Formula Grants, and HHS' LIHEAP. GAO interviewed selected agency budget officials, program staff, and a nongeneralizable sample of program recipients and national organizations that represent program recipients.

View [GAO-22-104701](#). For more information, contact Jeff Arkin at (202) 512-6806 or arkinj@gao.gov

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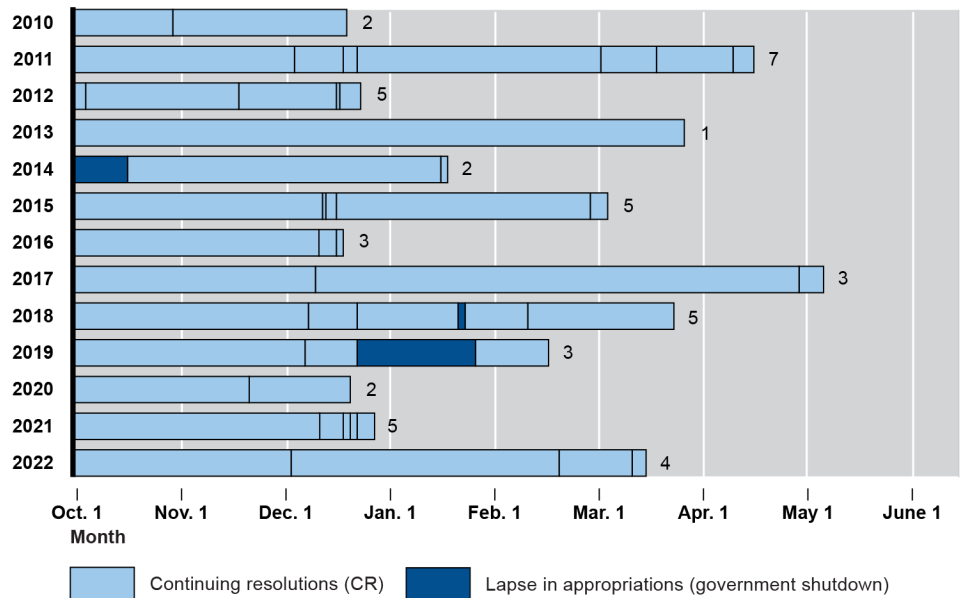
FEDERAL BUDGET

Selected Agencies and Programs Used Strategies to Manage Constraints of Continuing Resolutions

What GAO Found

From fiscal years 2010 through 2022, Congress and the President enacted 47 continuing resolutions (CRs) that ranged from 1 day to 176 days (see figure).

Duration and Number of Continuing Resolutions and Lapses in Appropriations, Fiscal Years 2010-2022
Fiscal year



Source: GAO analysis of applicable laws. | GAO-22-104701

The three selected agencies and programs reported that they have experienced administrative inefficiencies and limited management options in areas like hiring during CRs. For example, Department of Agriculture (USDA) officials reported that CRs can cause hiring activities to slow down or pause. This can affect strategic hiring plans and program services. Recipients of the three selected agencies and programs also reported that CRs can create funding uncertainty and administrative burdens. For example, delays in learning about final funding amounts can affect the planning of the Department of Education's Predominantly Black Institutions (PBI) grant initiatives at recipient schools.

However, the three selected agencies and programs and their recipients have strategies to mitigate possible disruptions, allowing operations and services to continue during CRs. According to Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) officials, the agency can request and receive an exception apportionment that allows grantees to receive 90 percent of the previous year's funding at the beginning of the next fiscal year, rather than the standard apportionment that is provided during the CR. Additionally, some LIHEAP grantees have access to additional funding, like state utility funds or funding from the state budget. This can help if disruptions occurred at the beginning of the fiscal year.