
Authorizing Committee

A standing committee of the House or Senate with legislative jurisdiction over the establishment, continuation, and operations of federal programs or agencies. The jurisdiction of such committees extends, in addition to program legislation, to authorization of appropriations legislation. (Normally, authorization of appropriations legislation is a prerequisite for making appropriations for the given programs or agencies.) An authorizing committee also has jurisdiction in those instances where backdoor authority is provided in the substantive legislation. For further discussion, see the current rules of the House of Representatives and the Senate. (*See also* Authorizing Legislation; Backdoor Authority/Backdoor Spending; Oversight Committee; Spending Committee.)

Authorizing Legislation

Substantive legislation, proposed by a committee of jurisdiction other than the House or Senate Appropriations Committees, that establishes and continues the operation of a federal program or agency either indefinitely or for a specific period or that sanctions a particular type of obligation or expenditure within a program. This term is used in two different ways: (1) to describe legislation enacting new program authority, that is, authorizing the program, and (2) to describe legislation authorizing an appropriation.

Authorization of appropriations legislation authorizes the enactment of appropriations of specific amounts for specific programs and activities to be provided in an appropriation act. An authorization of appropriations is, under congressional rules, a prerequisite for such an appropriation. Thus, for example, a point of order may be raised in either house objecting to an appropriation in an appropriation act that is not previously authorized by law. An authorization of appropriations may be part of the organic legislation for the agency or program or it may be separate legislation. Oftentimes, the authorization of appropriation may be inferred from an appropriation provided in an appropriation act. The authorization of appropriation may specify the amount of budget authority to be included in the appropriation act or it may authorize the appropriation of “such sums as may be necessary.” In some instances, authorizing legislation may contain an appropriation or provide other forms of budget authority, such as contract authority, borrowing authority, or entitlement authority. (*See also* Appropriation Act; Backdoor Authority/Backdoor Spending; Entitlement Authority; Limitation; Point of Order; Reauthorization.)