

# The Budget and Homeland Security: Homeland Security Issues in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress

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Congress at times has sought to ascertain how much the government spends on securing the homeland, either in current terms or historically. Several factors compromise the authoritativeness of any answer to this question. One such complication is the lack of a consensus definition of what constitutes homeland security, and another is that homeland security activities are carried out across the federal government, in partnership with other public and private sector entities. This insight examines those two complicating factors, and presents what information is available on historical homeland security budget authority and current DHS appropriations.

## Defining Homeland Security

No statutory definition of homeland security reflects the breadth of the current enterprise. The Department of Homeland Security is not solely dedicated to homeland security missions, nor is it the only part of the federal government with homeland security responsibilities.

The concept of homeland security in U.S. policy evolved over the last two decades. Homeland security as a policy concept was discussed before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Entities like the [Gilmore Commission](#) and the [Hart-Rudman Commission](#) discussed the need to evolve national security thinking in response to the increasing relative risks posed by nonstate actors, including terrorist groups. After 9/11, policymakers concluded that a new approach was needed to address these risks. A presidential council and department were established, and a series of presidential directives were issued in the name of "homeland security." These efforts defined homeland security as a response to terrorism. Later, multilevel government responses to disasters such as [Hurricane Katrina](#) expanded the concept of homeland security to include disasters, public health emergencies, and other events that threaten the United States, its economy, the rule of law, and government operations. Some criminal justice elements could arguably be included in a broad definition of homeland security. This evolution of the concept of homeland security made it distinct from other federal government security operations such as homeland defense.

[Homeland defense](#) is primarily a Department of Defense (DOD) activity and is defined by DOD as "... the protection of U.S. sovereignty, territory, domestic population, and critical defense infrastructure against external threats and aggression, or other threats as directed by the President." [Homeland security](#), on the other hand, is a more broadly coordinated effort, involving not only military activities, but the operations of civilian agencies at all levels of government.

## The Federal Homeland Security Enterprise

The [Homeland Security Act of 2002](#) established the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The department was assembled from components pulled from 22 different government agencies and began official operations on March 1, 2003. Since then, DHS has undergone a series of restructurings and reorganizations to improve its effectiveness.

Although DHS does include many of the homeland security functions of the federal government, several of these functions or parts of these functions remain at their original executive branch agencies and departments, including the Departments of Justice, State, Defense, and Transportation. Not all of the missions of DHS are officially "homeland security" missions. Some DHS components have legacy missions that do not directly relate to conventional homeland security definitions, such as the [Coast Guard](#), and Congress has in the past debated whether FEMA and its disaster relief and recovery missions [belong in the department](#).

### Analyzing Costs Across Government

Section 889 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 required the President's annual budget request to include an analysis of homeland security funding across the federal government—not just DHS. This requirement remained in effect through the FY2017 funding cycle. The resulting data series, which included agency-reported data on spending in three categories—preventing and disrupting terrorist attacks; protecting the American people, critical infrastructure, and key resources; and responding to and recovering from incidents—provides a limited snapshot of the scope of the federal government's investment in homeland security.

According to these data, from FY2003 through FY2017, the entire U.S. government directed roughly \$878 billion (in nominal dollars of budget authority) to those three mission sets. Annual budget authority rose from roughly \$41 billion in FY2003 to a peak in FY2009 of almost \$74 billion. After that peak, reported annual homeland security budget authority hovered between \$66 billion and \$73 billion. Thirty different agencies reported having some amount of homeland security budget authority.

One can compare this growth in homeland security budget authority to the budget authority provided to DHS. The enacted budget for DHS rose from an Administration-projected [\\$31.2 billion in FY2003](#), to almost [\\$68.4 billion in FY2017](#).

### FY2019 DHS Appropriations

For FY2019, the Trump Administration initially requested [almost \\$75 billion in budget authority for DHS](#), including over \$47 billion in adjusted net discretionary budget authority through the appropriations process. This included almost \$7 billion to pay for the costs of major disasters under the Stafford Act. The Administration requested additional Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) funding for the Coast Guard as a transfer from the U.S. Navy. Neither the Senate nor the House bill reported out of their respective appropriations committees in response to that request received floor consideration.

Continuing appropriations expired on December 21, 2018, leading to a 35-day partial shutdown of federal government components without enacted annual appropriations—including DHS. This was the longest such shutdown in the history of the U.S. government. On February 15, the President signed into law [P.L. 116-5](#), which included [the FY2019 DHS annual appropriations act](#). The act included almost \$56 billion in adjusted net discretionary budget authority, including \$12 billion for the costs of major disasters, and \$165 million for Coast Guard OCO funding.

The current budget environment may present challenges to homeland security programs and DHS going forward. The funding demands of ongoing capital investment efforts, such as the proposed border wall and ongoing recapitalization efforts, and staffing needs for cybersecurity, border security, and immigration enforcement, may compete with one another for limited funding across the government and within DHS.