Markups Begin Despite No Budget Resolution

Although both the Senate and House passed budget bills (March 12 and March 25, respectively) and the House passed the conference report (May 19), at press time the Senate had not yet passed the conference report. Irrespective, the Appropriators in the House have begun markups, with a budget cap on discretionary spending at $814 billion (the FY2004 level). The LHHS bill, the largest of the domestic spending measures, is pegged at $142.3 billion, a $3.4 billion increase over the FY2004 total of $139 billion.

Eye and vision issues were prominent in the Senate’s March 11 debate on the budget bill. In introducing his successfully-passed amendment to increase FY2005 NIH funding by $1.3 billion, for a total of $2 billion over FY2004 to $30 billion, LHHS Appropriations Subcommittee chair Arlen Specter noted that “NIH has made phenomenal progress against...diseases, including glaucoma and macular degeneration” and noted that the additional funds (in part) were necessary “to launch a clinical trials network to test new therapies for age-related macular degeneration.”

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