
Congress and You - The people, process and policy

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- **People**
 - **Personal Office**
 - **Committees of Oversight**
- **Process**
 - **House of Representatives vs. Senate**
- **Policy**
- **Engaging Congress: Why, Who, How, When**

Key Terms

- **Policy not politics**
- **Majority or Minority (not Republicans or Democrats)**
- **Member = Senator or Congressman**
- **Staffer = personal or professional staff member**
- **Committee Staffer = Professional Staff Member (PSM)**
- **Personal Staffer = Legislative Assistant**
- **Defense: Military Legislative Assistant or National Security Advisor**

Where do all these people work?

People – Personal Offices

- **House = 18 full time, 4 part time**
- **Senate = size determined by state**
 - **Oklahoma with population of 3 million = ~40**
- **Member (Senator or Congressman)**
- **Chief of Staff**
- **State/District Office**
 - **Field reps, case workers**
- **DC Office**
 - **Legislative team, communication team**

What about the committees?

People – Committees of Oversight

- **Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) & House Armed Services Committee (HASC)**
 - **Subcommittees – some named the same, some not**
 - **Authorizes activities, sets policy (new starts, pay raises, MILCON, end strength)**
 - **National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)**
 - **Only annual authorization legislation – 58 years and counting**
 - **Senate Appropriations Committee (SAC) & House Appropriations Committee (HAC)**
 - **Subcommittees – Defense and MILCON/VA**
 - **Appropriates money (and rescinds money)**
 - **If money is appropriated, then the activity is authorized**
 - **Appropriators will not set policy (except when they do...)**
 - **Others: Intelligence, Homeland Security**
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House of Representatives

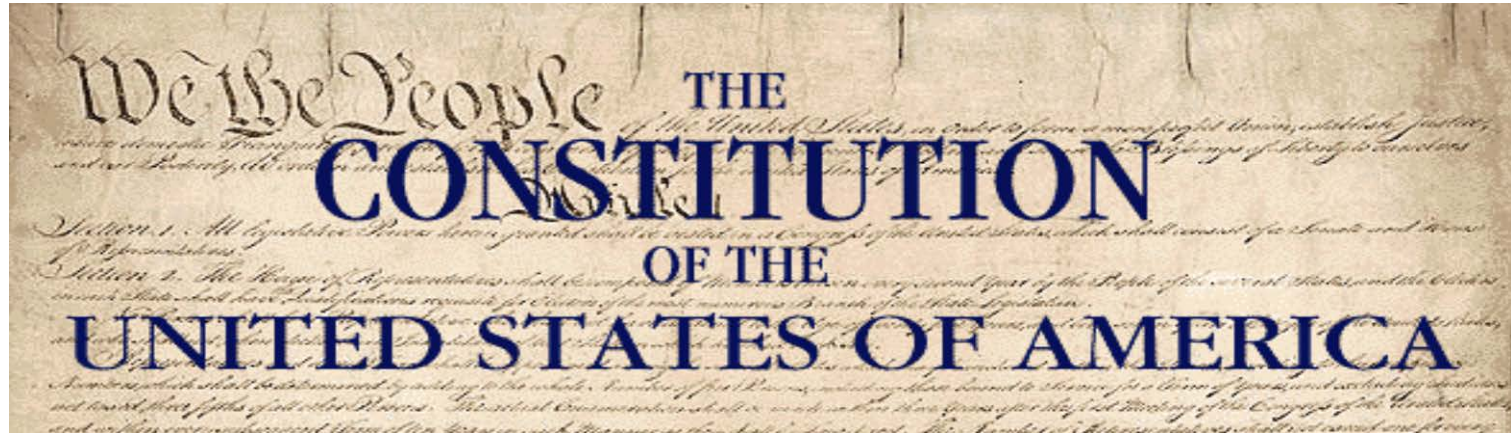
- **Majority Rules = 51%**
- **Rules Committee influence**
 - **Super Majority – 9 Majority vs. 4 Minority**
 - **Change what is included in the reported bill – deletion**
 - **Decides “what is in order” for amendments**
- **Personal offices**
 - **Two year election cycle**
 - **Staff: Young and eager**
- **Committees**
 - **Staff: bipartisan & around a LOT longer than two years...**

If legislation is supported by the Majority, it will pass...

- Every Senator has the same influence as the next
- 60 votes for most things
 - Current majority has 53, Super majority = 60
- Unanimous Consent (UC)
 - Majority of motions pass by UC
 - Only ONE Senator needs to object
- Personal offices
 - Six year election cycles
 - More experienced and potentially much larger
- Committees

Why should I care?

Why do I have to engage with Congress?



Article I, Section 8

The Congress shall have power to declare war ... raise and support armies ... provide and maintain a navy ... make rules for the government and regulation of the land and naval forces.

It's the law!

Engaging Congress – Who


- **Know your audience**
 - **Personal staff: typically younger, local focus**
 - **Committee staff: experienced, global, long memories...**
 - **Know your topic...but maybe in a different way**
 - **Current events**
 - **Congressional Research Service**
 - **Government Accountability Office**
 - **Inspector General Reports**
 - **Know your elevator speech**
 - **Present facts, careful with the anecdotes**
 - **Consider “red teaming” your presentation**
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Engaging Congress – How

- **Three potential types of engagements**
- **Legislation**
 - What is needed to allow you do your job
 - What is needed to make you do your job
- **Oversight**
 - Authorizers – are you following the law
 - Appropriators – are you using the money
- **Information Gathering**
 - Supports legislation and oversight
 - Tools: hearings, meetings, trips, reports

Engagement goes both ways...but timing is critical

Engaging Congress – When

- **Law: President's Budget first Monday in February**
 - **February – Hearings (budget and topical)**
 - **March – More hearings**
 - **April – Subcommittee Markup**
 - **May – Committee Markup**
 - **June – House/Senate Floor (before summer recess)**
 - **July – Conference/Final Passage**
 - **August – Recess**
 - **September – Oversight**
 - **October – Oversight**
 - **November – Oversight**
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What's the goal?

Thoughts on Policy

- **Working definition:**

**Policy is the intersection
of what is right and what is achievable**

- **State vs Federal**

- **Value of Interest Groups**

- **Understanding the Problem vs Advocating a Solution**

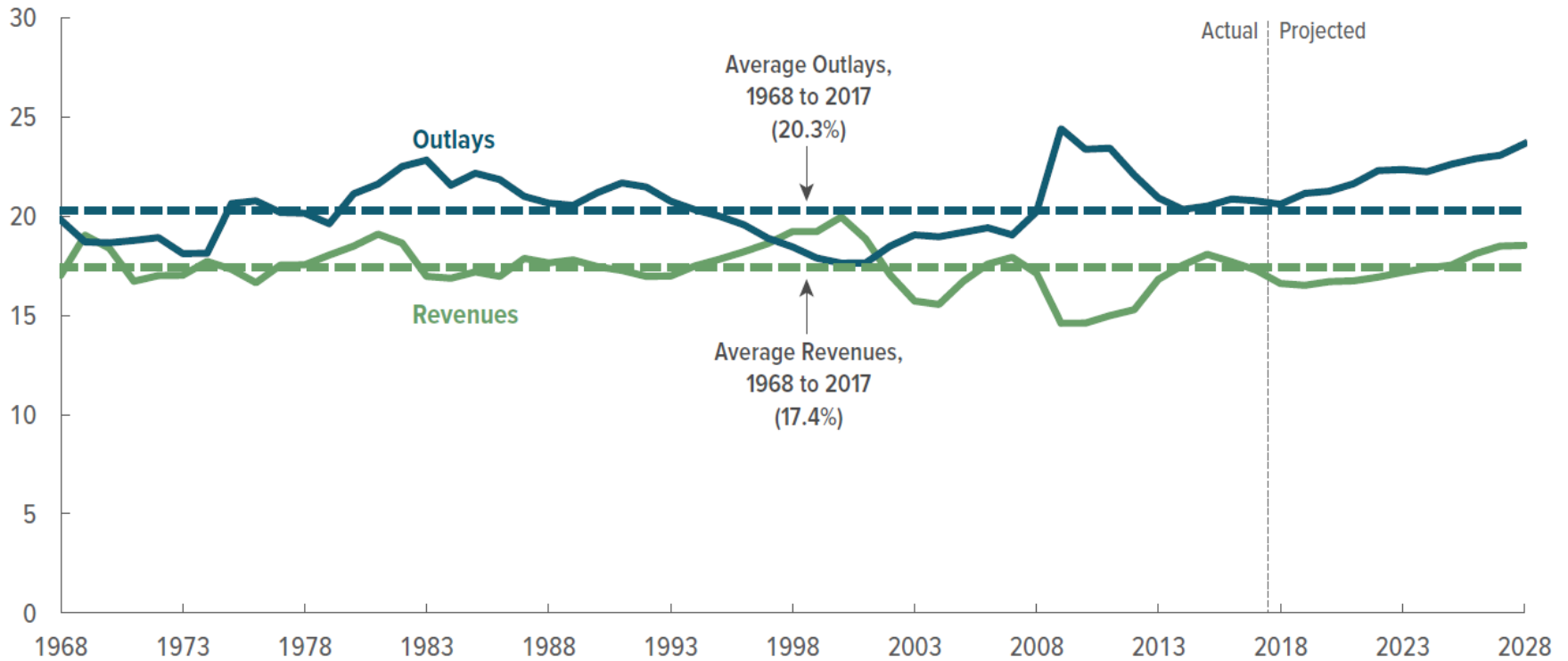
Why is Policy So Hard??

The Coming Train Wreck

Figure 4-2.

Total Revenues and Outlays

Percentage of Gross Domestic Product

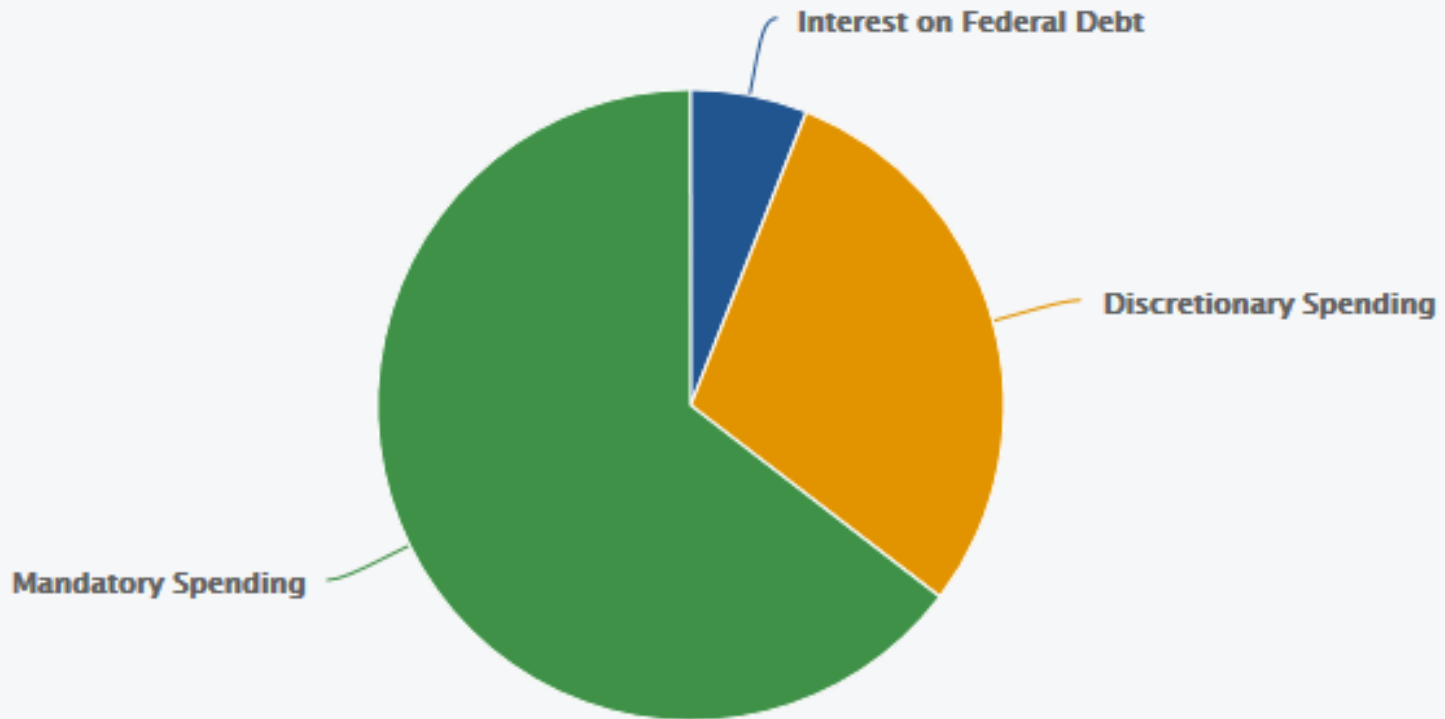


Source: Congressional Budget Office.

Mandatory vs. Discretionary

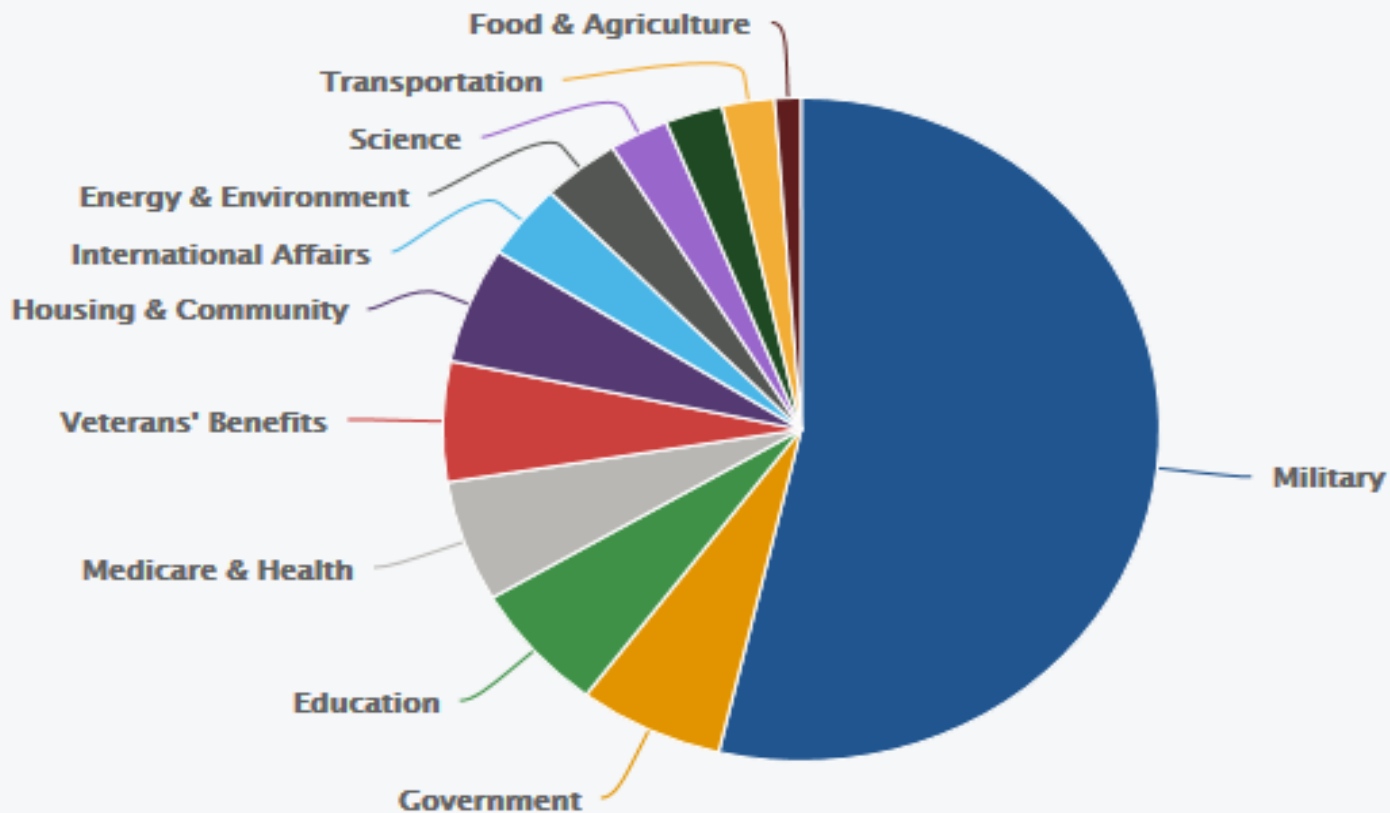
FY2015 Mandatory and Discretionary Spending and Interest on Federal Debt

(In 2015 Dollars)



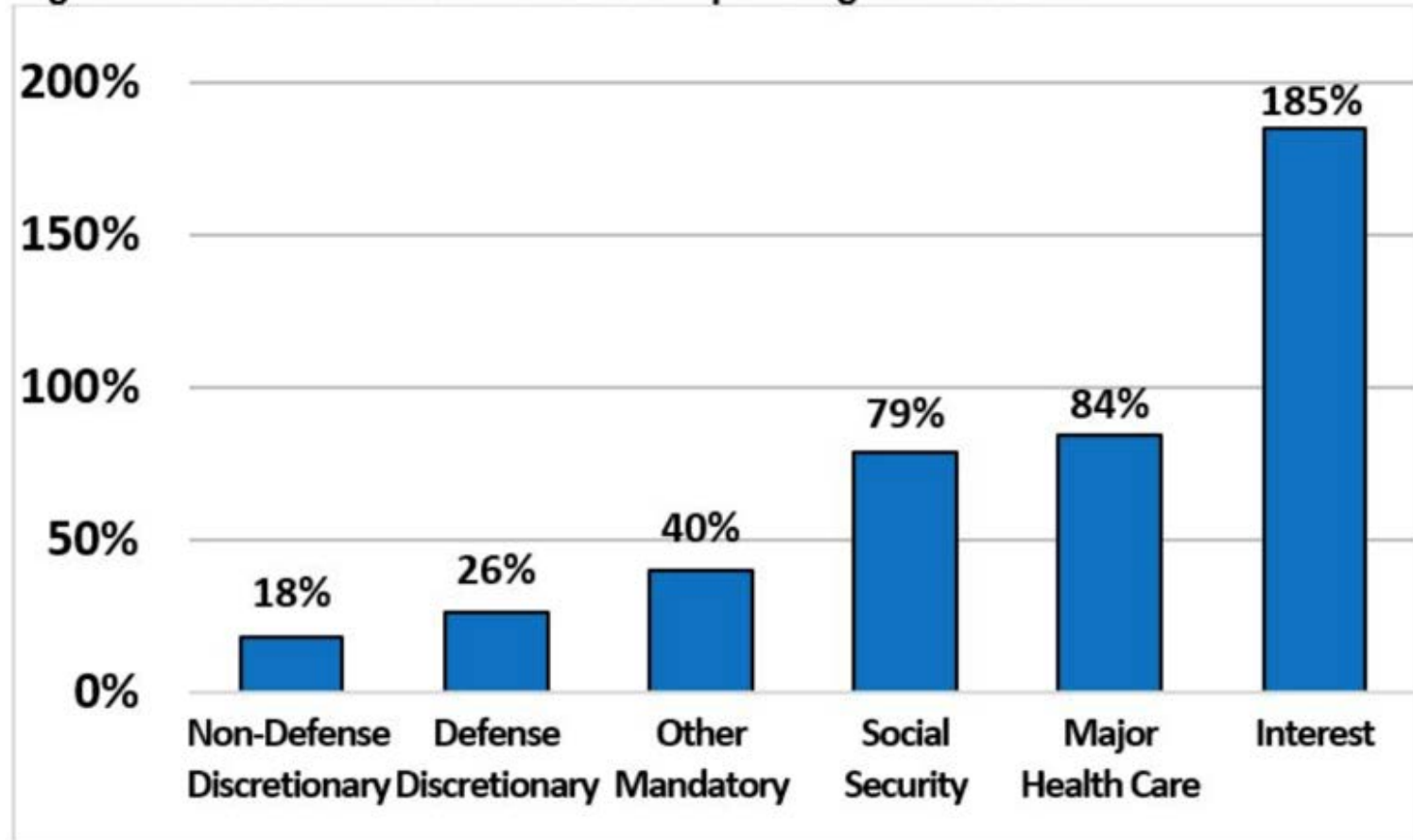
Defense vs. Non-Defense Spending

Discretionary Spending 2015: \$1.11 Trillion



Or to Put It Another Way

Figure 1: Percent Growth in Nominal Spending 2017 to 2027



Source: CBO January 2017 Baseline

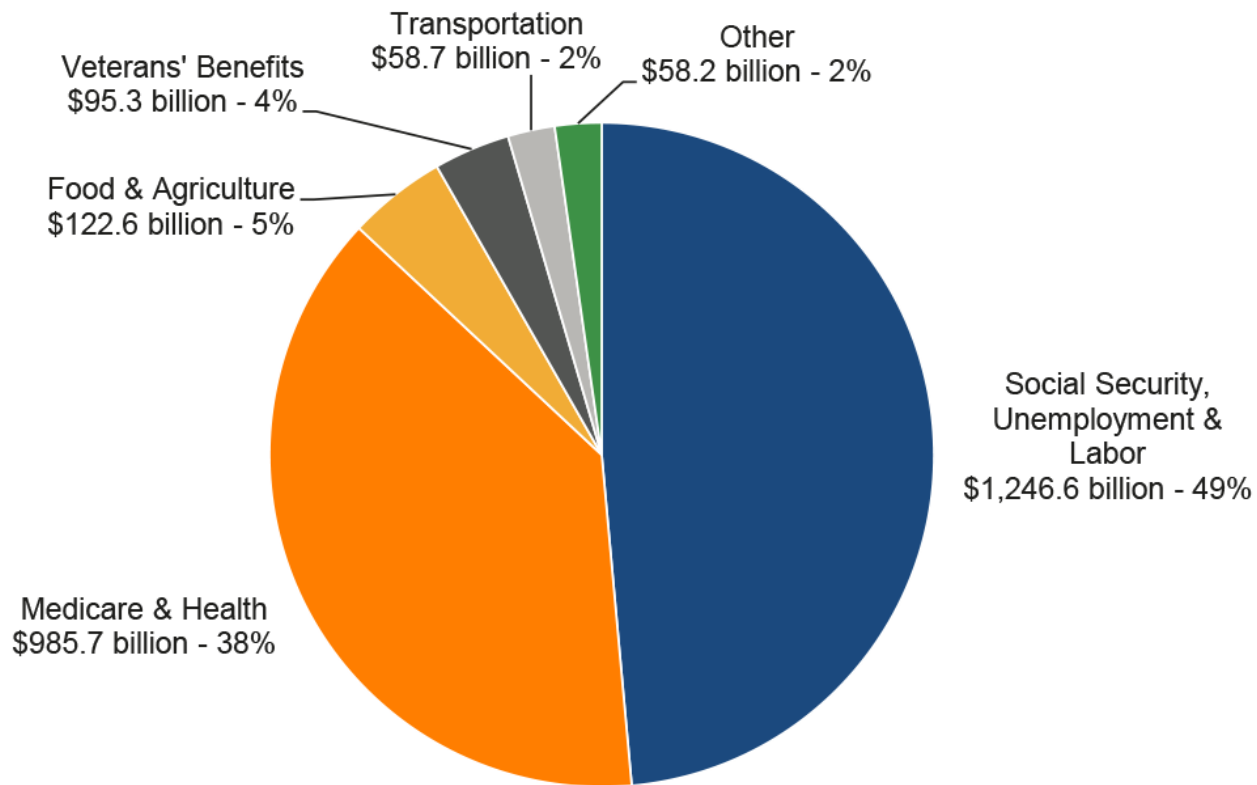
Questions

Closing Thoughts

- **Every day...**
- **Grateful for my military education, training, experiences**
 - **And TRICARE...**
- **Amazed at the brilliance of our founding fathers**
 - **The system works...**
- **Thankful for all those that serve our great nation**
 - **Not just in the military...**

Total Mandatory Spending

Total Mandatory Spending 2015: \$2.45 Trillion



Total Federal Spending

Total Federal Spending 2015: \$3.8 Trillion

