



AJA Monthly Report - December 2022

Last Updated: January 10, 2023

Washington Update

Congress spent most of December debating and negotiating funding for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2023. Following a brief continuing resolution to keep the government operating for a couple weeks until a larger bill could be agreed to, Congress passed a \$1.7 trillion omnibus spending bill. Among other spending, the legislation provided \$1.8 billion in new funding to implement the bipartisan CHIPS and Science Act of 2022, \$42 billion in aid to Ukraine, and more than \$27 billion for the victims of recent natural disasters.

Also in December, Congress reached a bipartisan, bicameral agreement for the 62nd consecutive year on the National Defense Authorization Act. Each year, the NDAA authorizes funding levels and provides authorities for the U.S. military and other critical defense priorities.

On December 8th, the Administration announced the release of WNBA player, Brittney Griner, from detention in Russia. She was released by Russia in a 1-for-1 prisoner swap for a convicted arms dealer.

At the end of December, both the Administration and Congress awaited the new year and the start of the 118th Congress, when the new Republican majority would take over the House of Representatives and Democrats would arrive with a slightly larger, but still narrow, majority in the U.S. Senate.

Lobbyit Jail Visit

In December, members of Lobbyit's team visited and toured the Prince William-Manassas Adult Detention Center. The visit allowed Lobbyit to witness first-hand and gain a deeper understanding of the issues facing the country's jails. Following the 2.5 hour tour, Lobbyit then had the opportunity to sit down with the detention center's administrators to discuss these issues in greater depth. In particular, Lobbyit witnessed and learned more about the challenges jails are facing regarding resource limitations, recidivism, mental health, health care, and the opioid epidemic.

Lobbyit came away from the visit impressed with the staff and leadership of the facility. Given Prince William-Manassas' proximity to Washington, DC, Lobbyit believes that the facility offers a potential opportunity to offer visits to key Congressional staff so that they can also gain a deep understanding of these issues and challenges. As AJA continues to nurture and develop champions on Capitol Hill, we recommend considering offering a tour to these champions.

Mental Health Draft Letter to Senate Leadership

As the 117th Congress wound down, AJA and the National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC) agreed to work together to draft and send a joint letter to Senate leadership regarding mental health policy. The letter would urge Senate leadership to ensure that the work conducted in the Senate in the 117th Congress on a broad mental health package continues and does not falter in the 118th Congress. Lobbyit proposed the idea to AJA and NCCHC and wrote the draft language. As the end of the 117th Congress focused on funding the federal government for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2023 and was shortened by the holidays, the letter will be sent to Senate Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell during the first week of January as the 118th Congress begins.

Notable Provisions in the FY23 Omnibus Appropriations Bill

The end-of-the-year omnibus spending package that Congress passed in late December contained several provisions related to jails that AJA should be aware of:

** The legislation requires the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct outreach regarding the Veterans Justice Outreach Program to justice-involved veterans, military and veterans service organizations, and relevant stakeholders including jail systems. (The mission of the Veterans Justice Programs is to identify justice-involved veterans and contact them through outreach, in order to facilitate access to VA services at the earliest possible point.)

** The Secretary of Health and Human Services is required to conduct a study on the direct and indirect costs of serious mental illness with respect to the Federal government and state and local governments. Part of the report requires the Secretary to study the percentage of such individuals in penal facilities, including county and municipal jails.

** The bill provides \$14 million for each of fiscal years 2023 through 2027 for grants for jail diversion programs operated under the Public Health Service Act.

Bills by Issue

No bills to show.

Powered by
FiscalNote