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This Week In Congress Radio Address: Congressional Appropriations for Coming Fiscal Year,
1954 May 19

Speaker: Senator J. Allen Frear

Transcribed by: David Cardillo

[00:00]

Announcer: The Week in Congress, recorded on May 17th, 1954, and played on WDOV on May 19th, 1954.

Senator Frear: Thank you. With the coming of mid-May, congressional emphasis on appropriations for the forthcoming fiscal year begins to take form. Since the vast majority of legislation approved by the Senate and House must be implemented, either directly or indirectly by Federal funds, it is only natural that a maximum amount of attention should be devoted to a consideration of the vast money bills. Most Americans are perhaps unfamiliar with the technical aspects of congressional appropriations. The legislation which embodies funds for governmental functions is usually designated by a general title such as Defense Appropriations, Agricultural Appropriations, or Civil Functions. Within the scope of this general title is a tremendous number of sub-divisions through which the appropriations are disseminated to the various divisions of the department or agency to which they apply. To adequately understand and assimilate all that is contained within the framework of a single appropriations bill would require a protracted and detailed study of many, many weeks. Since individual members of Congress do not physically do not have the time to examine each of the appropriation bills so minutely, they must rely on, first, the recommendations of a particular agency which needs the money. Second, the Bureau of the Budget, which passes on departmental requests with the concurrence of the President, and finally, the Appropriations Committee of the Congress and its staff, which devotes lengthy hearings and discussions to each request for money. It is, of course, the right of every member of Congress to make his views known on the various appropriation bills during the course of public debate on the Senate or House floors. And as we all know, many bills are changed through the introduction of amendments by one or more members while the bill is either before the Senate or the House. Many individuals and organizations have suggested from time to time that a great deal more study precede formal action on our appropriation measures. Certainly, I agree with that recommendation. However, since we have not yet arrived at the point where our appropriation bills are perfectly tailored to suit the requirements, we still must do a certain amount of estimating in passing on many requests. It would be an exceedingly fine accomplishment if the government could be operated with the same efficiency that is found in

most successful business organizations. To a large extent, this is possible except for the fact that conditions arise from time to time which can almost completely reverse the normal trend of events which the government leaders are planning to follow. Nevertheless, it seems to me that Congress and the people have before them the constant obligation to keep government expenditures as closely as possible within the limits of our income. In other words, the government, like most average Americans, should realize that it cannot constantly spend more than it is making without jeopardizing its credit standing or without threatening its fiscal solvency. As a matter of fact, our Federal budget is now out of balance. We are in the red. However, it is to be hoped that through prudent action in passing on current appropriations, we may be able to take steps toward bringing the budget back into balance in the not too distant future. In this connection, however, the greatest unknown quantity now facing us is the uncertainty of international affairs. I well recall just about four years ago at this time that those of us who were then members of the Senate Finance Committee were at work on a tax reduction bill, which we hoped to have approved. Then suddenly, from across the 38th Parallel, the Communists swept down into South Korea. We all know what has happened since. Now, just four years later, the Communists are moving again, this time in Indochina. It has not yet been definitely established, or at least announced, what our country will do to counteract this latest threat to freedom. But, a decision could develop which would make it necessary that we vastly increase the scope of our defense activities. [05:03] If that occurs, the present estimate of our appropriation needs would vary greatly, and might require considerably greater Federal funds than are now anticipated. Meanwhile, the best course of action possible appears to be one of trying to do our best to appropriate carefully and sensibly for all non-defense spending in particular, but also in defense spending as well. We must never forget that the economic well-being of the United States is of paramount importance to the preservation of freedom and democracy in many other lands. The free world looks to us for guidance and leadership in these perilous days.

[End 06:00]