

Spending Bill Extends Ban on A-76 Studies

BY SARAH CHACKO | DECEMBER 20, 2011

The 2012 omnibus spending bill passed last week by Congress would extend a ban on agencies from competing work between contractors and federal employees.

These competitions are known as A-76 studies because they are conducted according to rules known as Office of Management and Budget Circular A-76. For the past three years, Congress has prohibited A-76 studies.

Sen. Barbara Mikulski, D-Md., who sponsored the provision in the spending bill that bans A-76 studies, has long criticized efforts to contract out government work as a waste of taxpayer dollars, bad for morale at federal agencies, and slanted against federal employees. In previous years, Mikulski unsuccessfully attempted to change the public-private competition guidance by requiring contractors to demonstrate a savings of at least 10 percent or \$10 million when compared with the cost of doing work with federal employees.

She also tried to prevent the federal workforce from being managed by arbitrary quotas or caps in the Senate version of the 2012 financial services spending bill, but the provision was taken out in the final version.

As Congress tries to reduce the government's deficit, federal jobs, pay and benefits are often first on the chopping block, Mikulski said in a statement.

"This is about fairness for federal employees and making sure a broken process is not put back into place until it's fixed," she said.