

Blurred Boundaries: Examining the Boundary Between Authorizations and Appropriations



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Abstract

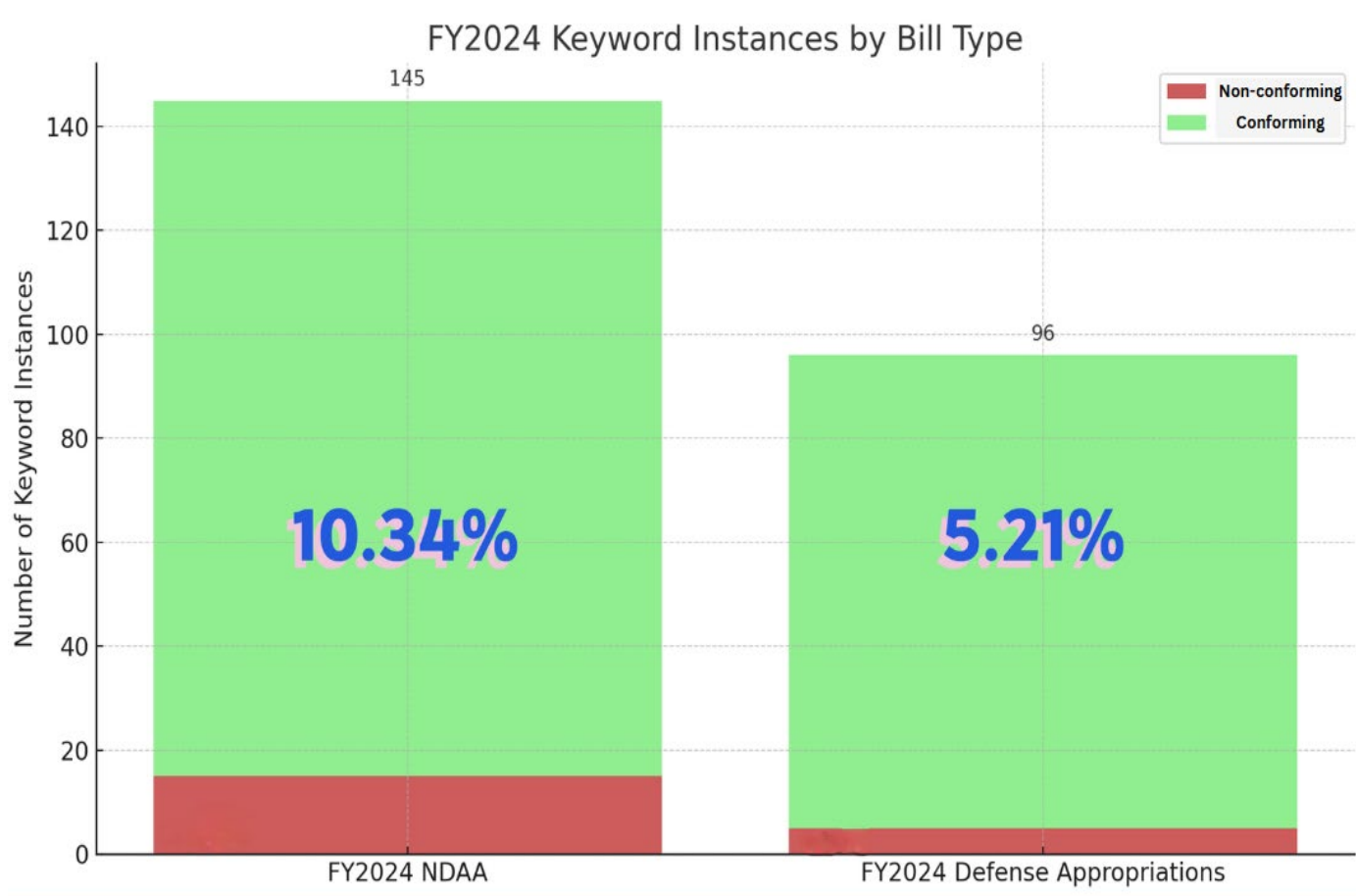
Congressional regulations distinguish between defense authorization and appropriation bills, entrusting policy responsibilities to the Armed Services Committees and funding authority to the Appropriations Committees. However, overlapping jurisdictional boundaries often complicate this structure. This thesis explores whether the language used in legislation indicates jurisdictional overreach between these two committees. Employing a mixed-method approach, we conducted a Python-based keyword frequency analysis on the National Defense Authorization Acts and Defense Appropriations (NDAA) Bills from fiscal year (FY) 2020 through fiscal year 2024 to find instances of such overreach. This was followed by qualitative verification and a third-party review to evaluate the frequency and type of non-conformity. The results revealed that FY2024 contained 15 instances of non-conformity out of 145 keyword occurrences, while the Appropriations Bill had 5 out of 96 indications. This suggests that authorizers may engage in jurisdictional overreach more frequently than appropriators. These findings challenge the conventional belief that fiscal committees are the primary source of overreach. The analysis demonstrates a method for analyzing congressional committee behavior.

Methods

- Literature review:**
 - Reviewed prior research on Congressional committees exceeding their jurisdictional bounds. Established keywords selection based on their research.
- Datamining**
 - Utilized PYTHON to run a coded data script to extract the instances the keywords were found within FY2020-FY2024 NDAA and Appropriations Act.
- Qualitative Analysis**
 - Extracted all provisions flagged as non-conforming and conducted a narrowed analysis on FY2024 NDAA and Appropriations to validate if the findings were conforming or non-conforming.
- Inter—rater Review**
 - A third party assessed the dataset, to verify the initial classifications and any discrepancies between the primary and secondary evaluations were reconciled through discussion.

Results & Impact

- The initial assessments suggest the methodology could yield meaningful outcomes.
- The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) exhibited more jurisdictional overreach (15 verified instances). And the Defense Appropriations Bill had 5 instances of non-conforming provisions in the form of policy riders.



Future Research

- Refine Keywords:** Methodology has promise with further keyword refinement.
- Expand Scope:** Include multi-year analysis for further pattern comparison to create a strong validity.
- Wider Comparison:** Analyze the committee dynamics for trends relating to current events i.e. COVID, Ukraine war.



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