Forces Shaping This Year’s Budget and Appropriations Process

- Divided government
- The debt limit
- Changes in Congress over time
Divided Government

- Small majorities + polarized parties in the Senate = difficult to adopt individual spending bills in the Senate
- House controlled by GOP + Senate controlled by Democrats + Democratic president = conflict over spending priorities
- Recent experiences with this configuration: 2011-2014
The Debt Limit

• Why does it matter?
• How is it (not) linked to other fiscal decision-making?
Changes in Congress Over Time

• Turnover since:
  » 2011 debt limit fight
  » 2014 midterms

• Means fewer “old guard” members and fewer members who experienced previous crises