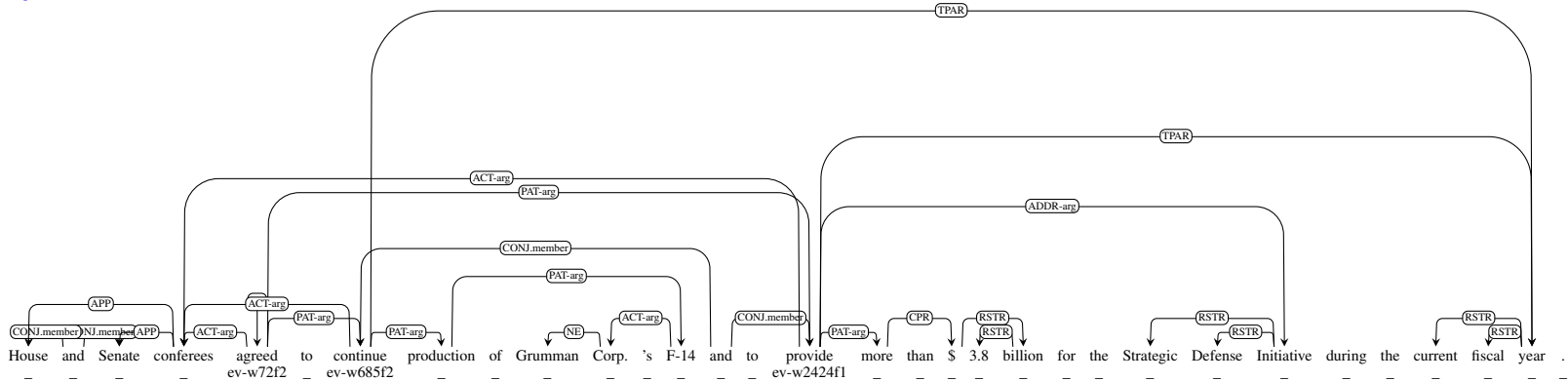
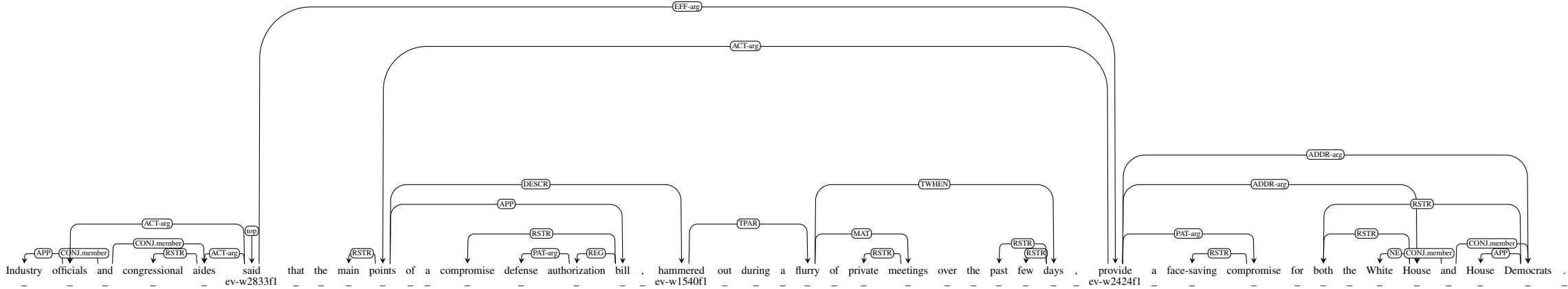


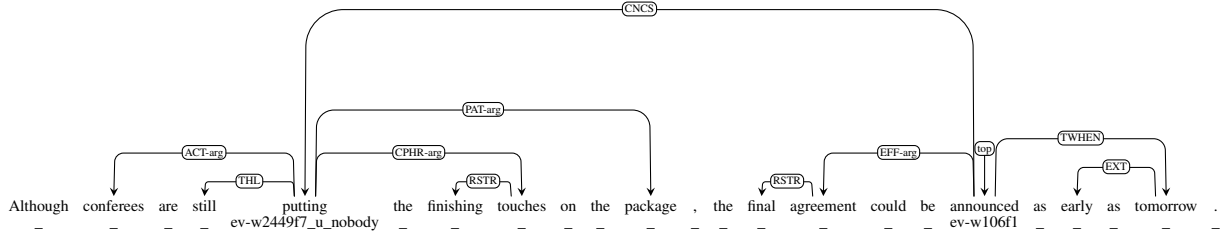
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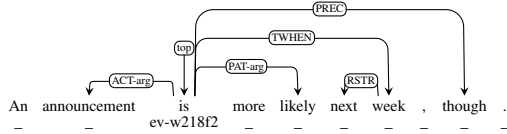
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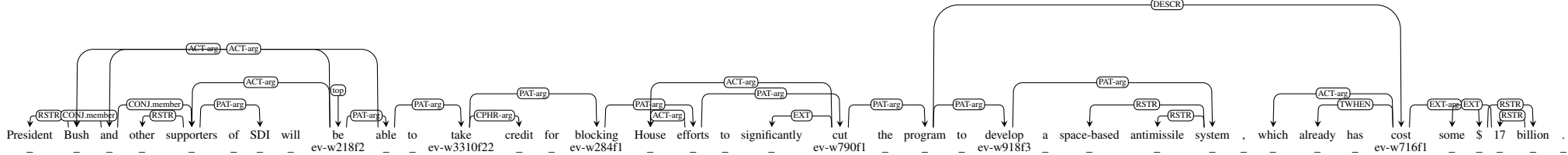
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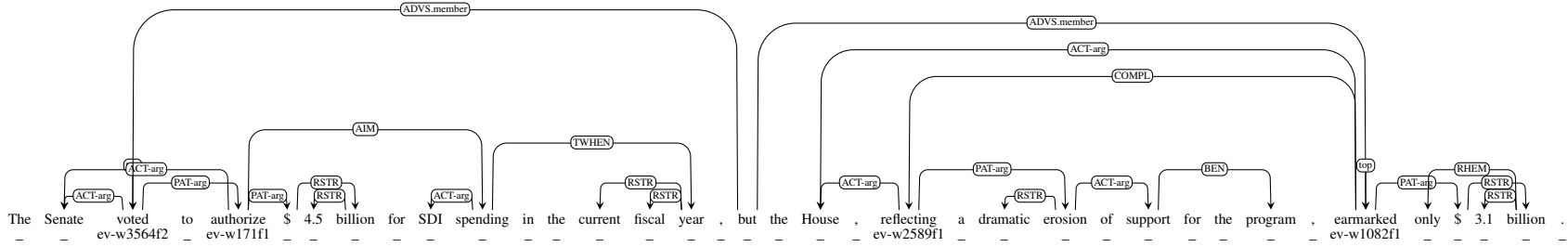
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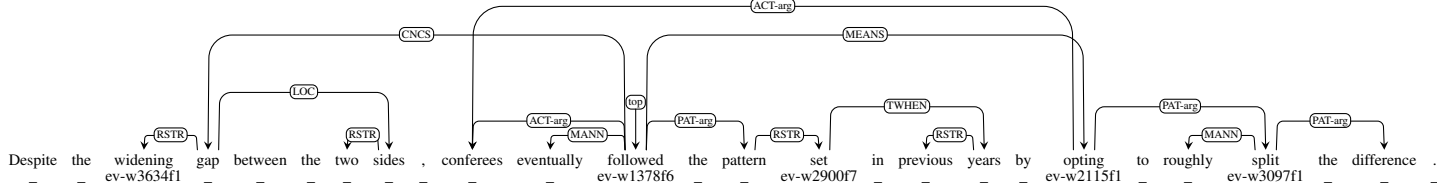
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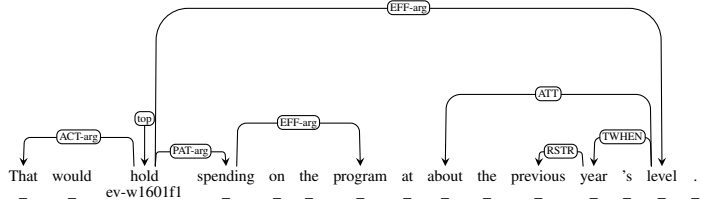
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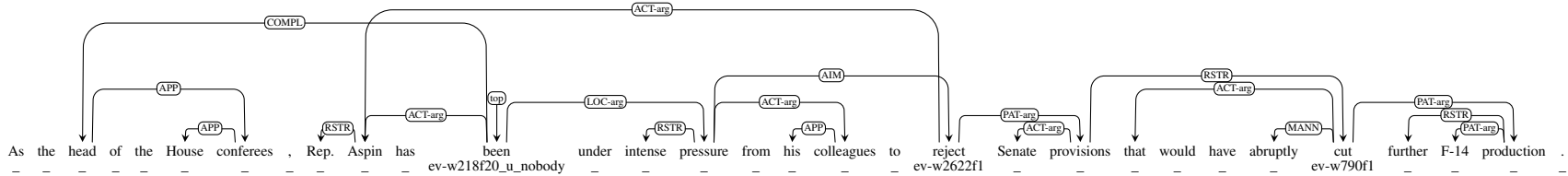
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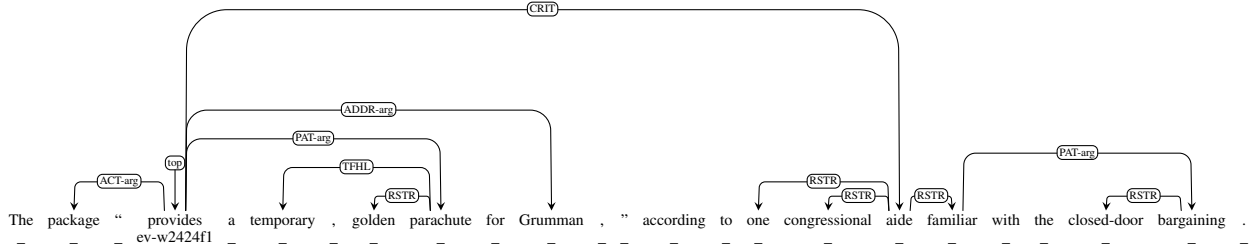
[21034009]



[21034011]



[21034012]



[21034013]

But as part of the overall agreement , Grumman and its outspoken supporters on Capitol Hill effectively will be precluded from reopening the emotional issue in the debate over next year 's budget .

[21034014]

Defense Secretary Dick Cheney and most senators contend that the Navy 's F-14 is too expensive in an era of shrinking Pentagon budgets .

[21034015]

But the plane boasts a strong core of support in the House , where members are intent on saving Grumman jobs and are worried about potential shortages of carrier-based aircraft by the late 1990s .

[21034016]

Conferees also agreed to Pentagon requests to earmark a total of nearly \$ 1 billion for work on both mobile MX and Midgetman nuclear missiles , according to congressional aides .

[21034017]

And lawmakers are putting the finishing touches on a compromise that would give the Air Force nearly all of the \$ 2.4 billion it wants for production of Northrop Corp. 's radar-eluding B-2 bombers , which cost \$ 550 million apiece .

[21034018]

The final B-2 agreement is certain to require detailed testing and verification of the bomber 's capabilities , but congressional aides said the accord wo n't include a House-passed provision that would have withheld production funds until Congress approves a cheaper , scaled-down version of the \$ 70 billion fleet of 132 B-2s envisioned by the Pentagon .