



COMMITTEE FOR A RESPONSIBLE FEDERAL BUDGET

Five Ways the Budget Process Has Failed February 23, 2018

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Today is the deadline for Congressional leaders to announce the Members of Congress serving on the Joint Select Committee on Budget and Appropriations Process Reform. This bipartisan, bicameral committee will have until the end of November to propose recommendations to reform the budget process.

It's clear the budget process could be improved. The way we budget now just shows how broken our entire process of governing has become. Missed deadlines and the threat of government shutdowns and defaults have become commonplace.

The current process has five major failures that should be addressed:

- **Lack of transparency**—Many parts of the process are opaque and confusing.
- **Lack of accountability**—Deadlines are often missed and budget rules are often waived without penalty or repercussion.
- **Lack of focus on the long term**—The process emphasizes heated debates over short term issues, focusing primarily on just 30 percent of spending and 0 percent of revenue.
- **Lends itself to crisis moments**—Crisis moments undermine the public trust and can lead to worse outcomes.
- **Increasingly terrible fiscal outcomes**—Our debt is at the highest level as a share of the economy since World War II, and in recent months lawmakers have passed large deficit-financed tax and spending bills that only worsen the situation.

This Joint Select Committee represents a chance to improve the process.

The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget has worked extensively on ideas to improve the budget process through the [Better Budget Process Initiative](#). Topics explored in depth [include](#): improving the focus on the long term, improving the debt limit, strengthening statutory budget enforcement, strengthening the budget resolution, reforming the budget baseline, and exploring prospects for reforms.

On Monday February 26, CRFB is hosting a Better Budget Process Summit—Rebuilding Confidence in Congress: Breaking Through on Budget Reform. At this event we will also be unveiling a new paper—*Playing By the (Budget) Rules: Understanding and Preventing Budget Gimmicks*. The paper identifies 20 types of budget gimmicks and possible solutions to address them.