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The Congressional Budget Process Timetable

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Summary

The Congressional Budget Act of 1974 (Titles I-IX of P.L. 93-344, 2 U.S.C. 601-688) established the congressional budget process, which coordinates the legislative activities on the budget resolution, appropriations bills, reconciliation legislation, revenue measures, and other budgetary legislation. Section 300 of this act provides a timetable (see **Table 1**) intended to ensure that Congress completes its work on budgetary legislation by the start of the fiscal year on October 1. For more information on the budget process, see the CRS Guides to Congressional Processes at http://www.crs.gov/products/guides/guidehome.shtml.

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Table 1. The Congressional Budget Process Timetable

Date	Action
First Monday in February	President submits budget to Congress.
February 15	Congressional Budget Office submits economic and budget outlook report to Budget Committees.
Six weeks after President submits budget	Committees submit views and estimates to Budget Committees.
April 1	Senate Budget Committee reports budget resolution.
April 15	Congress completes action on budget resolution.
May 15	Annual appropriations bills may be considered in the House, even if action on budget resolution has not been completed.
June 10	House Appropriations Committee reports last annual appropriations bill.
June 15	Congress completes action on reconciliation legislation (if required by budget resolution).
June 30	House completes action on annual appropriations bills.
July 15	President submits mid-session review of his budget to Congress.
October 1	Fiscal year begins.

Source: Section 300 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, as amended (P.L. 93-344, 2 U.S.C. 631).

Congress generally begins its budget process once the President submits his budget. The President is required by law to submit a comprehensive federal budget on or before the first Monday in February (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)).

The congressional budget process provides for the annual adoption of a concurrent resolution on the budget to serve as a framework for the consideration of budgetary legislation. The congressional budget timetable sets April 15 as a target date for completion of the annual budget resolution (prior to 1986, the date was May 15). Congress usually does not complete action on the budget resolution by this date.[1] Since the timetable was established in 1974, Congress has completed action on the budget resolution by the date set forth in the timetable only six times, most recently in 2003 for FY2004.

[1] Moreover, Congress did not complete action on a budget resolution in four years (in 1998, 2002, 2004, and 2006). For historical information on budget resolutions, see CRS Report RL30297, *Congressional Budget Resolutions: Historical Information*, by Bill Heniff Jr. and Justin Murray. In years when Congress is late in adopting, or does not adopt, a budget resolution, the House and Senate independently may adopt "deeming resolution" provisions for the purpose of enforcing certain budget levels. For further information on "deeming resolutions," see CRS Report RL31443, *The "Deeming Resolution": A Budget Enforcement Tool*, by Robert Keith.

Section 303(a) of the Budget Act prohibits any spending, revenue, or debt-limit legislation for the upcoming fiscal year from being considered before a budget resolution has been adopted. The House, however, may consider annual appropriations bills after May 15 if a budget resolution has not been adopted by then. The congressional budget process timetable also provides target dates for the House Appropriations Committee and the entire House to complete action on the annual appropriations bills. To encourage adherence to such target dates, Section 309 of the Budget Act prohibits the consideration of a resolution providing for an adjournment period of more than three calendar days during the month of July until the House has approved the annual appropriations bills for the upcoming fiscal year.

Under the Budget Act, Congress may include in the budget resolution reconciliation directives, instructing one or more committees, in each chamber, to recommend legislative changes to existing law to meet budget targets.[2] Such directives also include a date by which the instructed committees must submit legislation to their respective Budget Committees, if multiple committees in each chamber are involved, or report legislation to their respective chamber. This date effectively determines the timetable under which reconciliation legislation is considered, instead of the June 15 target date for the House to complete action on reconciliation legislation as specified in Section 300 of the Budget Act (i.e., the congressional budget process timetable). To encourage early action on reconciliation legislation, Section 310(f) of the Budget Act prohibits the consideration of a resolution providing for an adjournment period of more than three calendar days during the month of July until the House has completed action on the reconciliation legislation.[3]

The procedural rules set forth in the Budget Act are enforced by points of order.[4] These timing points of order, however, are not self-enforcing and may be waived or set aside by unanimous consent. In the House, such points of order may be waived by a special rule, reported by the House Committee on Rules, providing for the consideration of a measure. In the Senate, such points of order may be waived by motion. A motion to waive the point of order enforcing the requirement that the Senate Appropriations Committee make its suballocations before the Senate may consider any measure providing new budget authority for a fiscal year requires a three-fifths vote (i.e., 60 Senators if there are no vacancies), but the motion to waive other timing points of order requires a simple majority vote.

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[2] For further information on the reconciliation process, see CRS Report RL33030, *The Budget Reconciliation Process: House and Senate Procedures*, by Robert Keith and Bill Heniff Jr.

[3] Congress typically adjourns for its August recess at the end of July.

[4] For more detailed information on Budget Act points of order and their application, see CRS Report 97-865, *Points of Order in the Congressional Budget Process*, by James V. Saturno.

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