



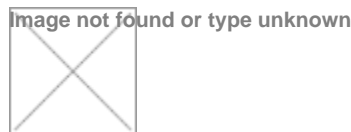
Insight

Budget Season: To Pass A Budget Or Not....

GORDON GRAY | APRIL 8, 2014

The Congressional Budget Act of 1974 provides a timeline for lawmakers to establish a budget for the federal government of the world's largest economy. The critical assumption is that lawmakers will actually abide by this schedule. The Obama administration regularly submits late budgets. Recent experience suggests that not only do lawmakers flout budget deadlines, but as demonstrated recently by the Senate they fail to even act. In the recent past the Senate regularly fails to even attempt to pass a budget. This year will be no different.

Table 1: Budget Timetable



Since the legislation's enactment in 1974, Congress successfully completed action on the budget according to the timeline a mere 6 times. The last time the budget was completed on schedule was in 2003 for fiscal year 2004.^[1]

Including this year, in 3 out the past 4 years, the full Senate failed to even consider a budget. The last time the Senate passed a formal budget resolution was in March of 2013, and only under threat of having Congressional pay suspended for failure to pass a budget under the "No Budget, No Pay Act." The House of Representatives, on the other hand, has been willing to consider and pass budgets in a timely fashion, and (assuming the FY2015 budget is passed) did so 4 out of the past 4 years.



Table 2: Congressional Action on Budget Resolutions

Passage of Congressional Budget Resolutions

Fiscal Year	House	Senate
1976	5/1/1975	5/1/1975

Passage of Congressional Budget Resolutions

	11/12/1975	11/20/1975
1977	4/29/1976	4/12/1976
	9/9/1976	9/9/1976
	2/23/1977	2/22/1977
1978	5/5/1977	5/4/1977
	9/8/1977	9/9/1977
1979	5/10/1978	4/26/1978
	8/16/1978	9/6/1978
1980	5/14/1979	4/25/1979
	11/28/1979	11/16/1979
1981	5/7/1980	5/12/1980
	11/18/1980	11/19/1980
1982	5/7/1981	5/12/1981
	12/10/1981	12/9/1981
1983	6/10/1982	5/21/1982
1984	3/23/1983	5/19/1983
1985	4/5/1984	5/18/1984
1986	5/23/1985	5/9/1985
1987	5/15/1986	5/1/1986
1988	4/9/1987	5/6/1987
1989	3/23/1988	4/14/1988

Passage of Congressional Budget Resolutions

1990	5/4/1989	5/4/1989
1991	5/1/1990	6/14/1990
1992	4/17/1991	4/25/1991
1993	3/5/1992	4/10/1992
1994	3/18/1993	3/25/1993
1995	3/11/1994	3/25/1994
1996	5/18/1995	5/25/1995
1997	5/16/1996	5/23/1996
1998	5/21/1997	5/23/1997
1999	6/5/1998	4/2/1998
2000	3/25/1999	3/25/1999
2001	3/23/2000	4/7/2000
2002	3/28/2001	4/6/2001
2003	3/20/2002	n/a
2004	3/21/2003	3/26/2003
2005	3/25/2004	3/12/2004
2006	3/17/2005	3/17/2005
2007	5/18/2006	3/16/2006
2008	3/29/2007	3/23/2007
2009	3/13/2008	3/14/2008
2010	4/2/2009	4/2/2009

Passage of Congressional Budget Resolutions		
2011	n/a	n/a
2012	4/15/2011	n/a
2013	3/29/2012	n/a
2014	3/21/2013	3/23/2013

This year offers an important contrast in how each chamber views their respective responsibilities. The current budget under which we’re operating, the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 provides for “Authority for fiscal year 2015 budget resolution.” It essentially grants the Budget Committee Chairs Senator Patty Murray and Congressman Paul Ryan, the authority to file in the Congressional Record the spending levels and other budget figures agreed to in the Act, and serves as the FY2015 budget resolution. This should only be a fallback mechanism that diminishes the possibility of a government shutdown by establishing preset appropriations limits. It should not take the place of full consideration of a ten year budget, with the votes and public debates that attend to that process. Very difficult policy choices need to be made to address the nation’s fiscal challenges. Deferring the public debate that needs to be had on those choices will only make the problem worse. The House of Representatives has been willing to undertake this effort for the last 4 years, while the Senate has largely refused.

[1] Heniff Jr., Bill. “Congressional Budget Resolutions: Historical Information,” Congressional Research Service. February 7, 2014