

The Responsible Budgeting Act

Passage of Concurrent Budget Resolution: If Congress passes a concurrent budget resolution for the next fiscal year that satisfies the “required ratio” (see below), a joint resolution is automatically sent to the President to suspend the debt limit through the end of the fiscal year of that concurrent resolution (i.e., September 30 of the following year).

Failure to Pass Concurrent Budget Resolution: If Congress does not adopt a concurrent resolution satisfying the required ratio by the earlier of April 15 or 60 days prior to the date by which the statutory debt limit will be reached, the President may submit a written notification to Congress suspending the debt limit until the end of the forthcoming fiscal year. The suspension will take place in 30 calendar days, unless Congress votes to disapprove of the President’s suspension. Congressional disapproval is subject to veto by the President, with a two-thirds vote by Congress needed to override a veto.

Submission of Debt Reduction Proposal: Alongside the suspension request, the President must submit to Congress a debt reduction proposal comprised of legislative text that the Director of the Office of Management and Budget determines will reduce debt-to-GDP by at least 5 percent of GDP in the 10th year relative to baseline projections of debt-to-GDP (the “required ratio”).

House Procedure

Request for Relevant Committee Recommendations: When the President’s submission is introduced, the Chairman of the House Budget Committee shall send the proposal to the Congressional Budget Office for scoring. The Chairman shall also submit to each relevant committee of jurisdiction a request that they provide within 30 days: 1) an assessment of the President’s proposal in that area; and 2) recommendations to either alter the President’s proposal or their own alternative deficit reduction proposal(s).

Discharge: Upon receipt, the House Budget Committee must report out a proposal that meets the required ratio. If the Budget Committee fails to report legislation meeting the required ratio within 60 days after the bill’s introduction, then the president’s original proposal—if it meets the required ratio, as scored by CBO—is automatically discharged without amendment.

Alternative Bipartisan Proposals: At this time, other proposals may also be submitted to the House Rules Committee by the majority leader, the minority leader, or any Representative sponsoring a bill that includes cosponsors representing at least one-third of the House or 20 members of each party. These proposals must also be scored by CBO as achieving the required ratio to qualify for consideration. A discharge petition signed by one-third of House membership can force a qualifying proposal out of the Rules Committee and onto the floor if the committee does not bring it to the floor for consideration within 30 calendar days. The House floor would proceed with “queen-of-the-Hill” voting, where the proposal with the most votes—contingent on it receiving majority support—is reported out.

Senate Procedure

Request for Relevant Committee Recommendations: When the President's submission is introduced, the Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee shall send the proposal to the Congressional Budget Office for scoring. The Chairman will also submit to each relevant committee of jurisdiction a request that they provide within 30 days: 1) an assessment of the President's proposal in that area; and 2) recommendations to either alter the President's proposal or their own alternative deficit reduction proposal(s).

Reporting a Deficit Reduction Proposal and Discharge: Upon receipt, the Senate Budget Committee must report out a proposal that meets the required ratio.

Alternative Bipartisan Proposals: One-fifth of the members of the Senate (including at least 10 members of the majority party and 10 of another party) may also develop and submit an alternative proposal to the Budget Committee. These alternative proposals will also be scored by CBO to determine if they meet the required ratio.

Discharge: If the Budget Committee fails to report legislation meeting the required ratio within 60 days after the original bill's introduction, then the president's original proposal—if it meets the required ratio, as scored by CBO—and any qualifying alternative bipartisan proposals are automatically discharged without amendment.

Consideration in the Senate: Any proposal that meets the required ratio and is either reported out by the Budget Committee or discharged to the calendar shall receive a vote on the motion to proceed (with a 60-vote threshold) within five days. Provisions of the bill shall be subject to points of order comparable to components of the Byrd Rule (i.e., must have a budgetary impact that is not merely incidental). If the motion to proceed passes, the Senate moves to consideration of the bill, which is not amendable.

Conference

If only one chamber passes a bill using this process, it will receive expedited consideration in the other chamber. If both chambers pass different bills using this process, the bills would be considered under the standard procedures governing consideration of differences in house bills.

Note: Nothing in this legislation prevents policymakers from addressing the debt limit through the traditional process (i.e., via legislation passed by each chamber and signed by the president).