

Congressman David Dreier
H.R. 114, the Biennial Budgeting and Appropriations Act of 2011
Summary

The annual rush to complete action on budget, authorization and appropriations bills not only results in a poor budget process, but also reduces the amount of time available for careful oversight and management of existing federal programs.

- During the 36 year history of the Budget Act, Congress has met the deadline for completion of a budget resolution only six times.
- Since 1954, Congress has been forced to enact continuing resolutions to fund government activities past the end of the fiscal year in every year but three (Fiscal Years 1989, 1995 and 1997).
- According to the Congressional Budget Office, Congress provided \$290.8 billion in Fiscal Year 2010 appropriations for 250 statutes whose authorizations had expired.
- For the first time since the passage of the 1974 Budget Act, in 2010 there was no Budget Committee markup and no floor consideration of a budget resolution.

H.R. 114, the Biennial Budgeting and Appropriations Act of 2011, will streamline the budget process and improve the fiscal management and oversight of government programs by instituting a biennial budget system. Under the bill, the President would submit a two-year budget and Congress would consider a two-year budget resolution and two-year appropriations bills during the first session. The second session would be devoted to consideration of authorization bills, programmatic oversight of government agencies and emergency spending bills.

Specifically, this legislation will provide:

Better Program Oversight and Improved Authorizations

- By eliminating repetitive and time-consuming appropriations work, the Congress as a whole and even the appropriations subcommittees would be better able to focus on oversight. This would also contribute to more appropriate funding decisions in biennial appropriation bills and any necessary supplemental/rescission legislation.
- As with oversight, biennial budgeting would allow more time for needed authorization legislation. In addition, the overwhelming appropriations work load every year has upset the intended balance in the role of authorizations and appropriations. Biennial budgeting would help restore the importance of the authorization process.

Improved Management

- Preparing for annual appropriations is as much or more of a drain on time and resources for federal agencies as it is for Congress. Biennial budgeting would increase agency efficiency and provide them with more stable and predictable budgets. In addition, Congress would be able to exercise better oversight over them.

More Predictability by Providing Budget Stability for the States

- As recently as WWII, all but four states had biennial budgeting. The growing dependence on annually appropriated big-government programs, however, helped moved many to change to annual cycles. Although this trend has reversed in recent years (today, 20 states have biennial budgets), biennial budgeting at the federal level would help states return to this common sense process. Even if states retain annual cycles, they will benefit from more stable and predictable federal funding.

Less Incentive for Wasteful Spending by Encouraging More Responsible Spending

- Budgeting and appropriating two fiscal years at a time better exposes year-to-year funding changes to scrutiny and requires more prudent funding decisions.

Biennial Budget Timetable

First Session	
On or before	Action to be completed
First Monday in February	President submits budget recommendations
February 15	Congressional Budget Office submits report to Budget Committees
Not later than 6 weeks after budget submission	Committees submit views and estimates to Budget Committees
April 1	Budget Committees report concurrent resolution on the biennial budget
May 15	Biennial appropriation bills may be considered in the House
June 10	House Appropriations Committee reports last biennial appropriation bill
June 30	House completes action on biennial appropriation bills
October 1	Biennium begins

Second Session	
On or before	Action to be completed
February 15	President submits budget review
Not later than 6 weeks after President submits budget review	Congressional Budget Office submits report to Budget Committees
The last day of the session	Congress completes action on bills and resolutions authorizing new budget authority for the succeeding biennium

Revised First Session Timetable for the First Term of a New President

First Session	
On or before	Action to be completed
First Monday in April	President submits budget recommendations
April 20	Committees submit views and estimates to Budget Committees
May 15	Budget Committees report concurrent resolution on the biennial budget
June 1	Biennial appropriation bills may be considered in the House
July 1	House Appropriations Committee reports last biennial appropriation bill
July 20	House completes action on biennial appropriations bills
October 1	Biennium begins