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H.R. 2664, the Biennial Budgeting and Appropriations Act of 2005 (May 26, 2005)

MR. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, 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 31 year history of the Budget Act, Congress has met the deadline for completion of a budget resolution only six times. Since 1953, Congress has been forced to enact continuing resolutions to fund government activities past the end of the fiscal year in every year but four (FY1953, FY1989, FY1995 and FY1997). And according to the Congressional Budget Office, Congress provided \$170 billion in fiscal year 2005 appropriations for 167 statutes whose authorizations had expired.

That is why I introduced the Biennial Budgeting and Appropriations Act of 2005, which streamlines the budget process and improves 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 11 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. Mr. Speaker, this is a proposal we've entertained in the past, and I believe it deserves a another look.

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/recision 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.

Preparing for annual appropriations is as much or more of a drain on time and resources for federal agencies as it is for Congress. It takes nearly three years for the Administration and Congress to produce and implement one annual budget. As a result, a great deal of time and manpower are diverted from managing existing programs, leading to delays in reform implementation and creating a slower and more bureaucratic government. Biennial budgeting would provide federal agencies more time for program oversight, increasing agency efficiency and providing them with more stable and predictable budgets. In addition, Congress would be able to exercise better oversight over them.

As recently as World War II, 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, 21 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.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to support the Biennial Budgeting and Appropriations Act of 2005. It will provide a starting point for discussions on how to improve the budget process and foster improved governance for the American people.