

BUDGETING FOR A BETTER AMERICA ACT

THE PROBLEM: A BROKEN BUDGET PROCESS & SPIRALING DEBT

The annual budget process, largely unchanged in the last 50 years, is supposed to help Congress develop an overall fiscal plan and complete appropriations on time to avoid Continuing Resolutions (CRs) and government shutdowns. The challenges for the country are mounting:

- **Missed Deadlines:** Since 1974, Congress has only adopted a budget resolution by the statutory deadline six times. Congress has not completed all 12 appropriations bills before the start of the fiscal year since FY1997. Hopping from crisis to crisis makes it more challenging to focus on long-term and strategic issues.
- **Impending Fiscal Disaster:** Our national debt is nearly \$40 trillion, net interest has eclipsed \$1 trillion annually, and Social Security and Medicare trust funds are projected to be depleted in the coming years.

In 2018, **Chairman Steve Womack (AR-3)** led the **Joint Select Committee on Budget and Appropriations Process Reform** tasked with addressing some of these challenges. Building on the Committee's recommendations, the **Budgeting for a Better America Act** incorporates additional reforms to improve transparency and develop policies to address the long-term debt.

THE SOLUTION: BUDGETING FOR A BETTER AMERICA ACT

Establishing a Fiscal Commission

Establishing an 18-member bipartisan commission aids in identifying and developing policies to achieve a 3 percent annual deficit-to-GDP ratio within 10 years and work towards long-term fiscal stabilization.

Switching to Biennial Budgeting

Adopting a biennial budgeting framework offers a practical step to address persistent delays in the current budget process and reduce the risk of government shutdowns and CRs.

- **Improves Long-Term Planning and Oversight** by empowering Congress to set fiscal priorities in the first year and do evaluation and oversight in the second.
- **Provides Greater Certainty for Agencies** by setting more predictable funding expectations for the executive branch—allowing better planning, contracting, personnel decisions, and operational stability.
- **Maintains Congress' Power of the Purse** by preserving the annual appropriations process and the ability to adjust funding levels each year to address economic conditions, national priorities, and emergencies.

Implementing Good Governance Reforms

- **Improving Fiscal Transparency:** Requires budget resolutions to include debt, deficit, and tax metrics—providing Congress and the public with a clearer understanding of fiscal impacts.
- **Monitoring the Fiscal State of the Nation:** Establishes an annual televised bicameral hearing with the Comptroller General to address the nation's long-term fiscal outlook.
- **Planning our Budget Earlier:** Requires an administrative supplemental budget submission from the President by December 1st to enable Congress to begin their work earlier.
- **Equipping Members with Budgetary Insights:** Requires the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) to conduct an introductory debt and deficit briefing for new members of Congress.