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# The Congressional Budget Process Timetable

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The Congressional Budget Act (CBA) of 1974 (Titles I-IX of P.L. 93-344, 88 Stat. 297-332) established the congressional budget process, which coordinates the legislative activities on the budget resolution, appropriations bills, reconciliation legislation, revenue measures, and other budgetary legislation. Section 300 of this act provides a timetable (see **Table 1**) so that Congress may complete its work on the budget by the start of the fiscal year on October 1. For more information on budget process, see [http://www.crs.gov/products/guides/guidehome.shtml].

### Table 1. The Congressional Budget Process Timetable

| Date | Action to be completed |
|---|---|
| First Monday in February | President submits budget to Congress. |
| February 15 | Congressional Budget Office submits economic and budget outlook report to Budget Committees. |
| Six weeks after President submits budget | Committees submit views and estimates to Budget Committees. |
| April 1 | Senate Budget Committee reports budget resolution. |
| April 15 | Congress completes action on budget resolution. |
| May 15 | Annual appropriations bills may be considered in the House, even if action on budget resolution has not been completed. |
| June 10 | House Appropriations Committee reports last annual appropriations bill. |
| June 15 | House completes action on reconciliation legislation (if required by budget resolution). |
| June 30 | House completes action on annual appropriations bills. |
| July 15 | President submits mid-session review of his budget to Congress. |
| October 1 | Fiscal year begins. |

The congressional budget process is initiated by the submission of the President's budget on or before the first Monday of February (31 U.S.C. 1105(a)). However, the

concurrent budget resolution is the centerpiece to the congressional budget process, providing the framework for subsequent legislative action on the budget.

The congressional budget timetable sets April 15 as a target date for completion of the annual budget resolution. However, Congress usually does not meet this deadline. Since the timetable was established in 1974, Congress has met the budget resolution deadline only six times during this 29-year period, most recently in 2003 for FY2004. Under the original deadline (prior to 1986, the deadline was May 15), Congress adopted the annual budget resolution on time twice, in 1975 and 1976. After the deadline was changed to April 15 with the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (see Section 201(b) of P.L. 99-177, 99 Stat. 1040), Congress has met its deadline four times, in 1993, 1999, 2000, and 2003. Further, Congress did not adopt a budget resolution twice (in 1998 for FY1999 and in 2002 for FY2003).

Section 303(a) of the CBA prohibits any spending, revenue, or debt-limit legislation for the upcoming fiscal year from being considered before a budget resolution has been adopted. However, the House may consider annual appropriations bills after May 15 if a budget resolution has not been adopted by then. In this case, the House Appropriations Committee must rely on the Section 302 allocations in connection with the most recently adopted budget resolution (i.e., the previous year's budget resolution). The House and Senate, however, may not consider any measure within the jurisdiction of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, respectively, providing new budget authority for a fiscal year until the appropriations committees make and report their Section 302(b) suballocations (see Section 302(c) of the CBA). Because the House historically initiates appropriations measures, the congressional budget process timetable places deadlines on the House Appropriations Committee and the entire House to complete action on the annual appropriations bills.

When Congress includes reconciliation directives in the budget resolution, it also includes instructions to one or more committees to submit their legislative recommendations to their respective chamber's Budget Committees by a certain date. In addition, Congress may include a deadline by which the House must complete action on reconciliation legislation, superseding the June 15 deadline in the Budget Act.

While the deadlines in the budget timetable generally are prescriptive, the 1974 CBA sets forth procedural rules to encourage adherence to the timetable. First, Section 309 prohibits the consideration of a resolution providing for an adjournment period of more than three calendar days during the month of July until the House has approved the annual appropriations bills for the upcoming fiscal year. Second, if reconciliation legislation is required by the budget resolution, Section 310(f) prohibits the consideration of a resolution providing for an adjournment period of more than three calendar days as well until the House has completed action on the reconciliation legislation.

The procedural rules set forth in the 1974 CBA are enforced by points of order. However, these timing points of order are not self-enforcing and may be waived. In the House, this usually is done by the adoption of a special rule reported by the Rules Committee. In the Senate, a three-fifths vote is necessary to waive the requirement that the Senate Appropriations Committee make its suballocations before the Senate may consider any measure providing new budget authority for a fiscal year, but other points of order related to timing may be waived by majority vote.