



COMMITTEE FOR A  
**RESPONSIBLE FEDERAL BUDGET**  
Objective. Nonpartisan. Committed to fiscal responsibility.

## 2021 HIGHLIGHTS: Q1 IN THE NEWS

### The Economist

“When did billions become trillions?” asks **Maya MacGuineas, president of the Committee for a Responsible Budget**, who for many years has warned of the long-term dangers of rising deficits. “It seems like just a minute ago we were worried about borrowing an additional \$10bn.”

“ ”

### The Washington Post

The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget projects that federal debt held by the public will reach 108 percent of GDP this year, surpassing the record set just after World War II.

### The New York Times

**Marc Goldwein, the senior policy director for the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget**, estimated that a family of five with household income of \$150,000 could receive about \$10,000 from the federal government this year, suggesting that the stimulus package would do much more than alleviate poverty.

### THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

But most agree it can't go on this way forever. “Nobody knows when and how the music stops,” says **Maya MacGuineas, president of the bipartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget**. “We are able to borrow so much more than we would have thought of because of global macroeconomic changes...but all those factors could change and change abruptly.”

### Widely Cited

The Committee was featured in more than 425 news stories this quarter. Below are a few of the outlets that cited our work.



POLITICO

CBSN



Associated Press



Los Angeles Times

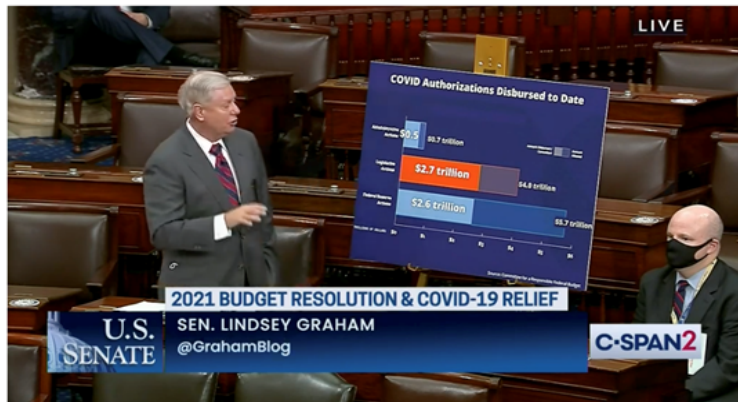


## On the Hill

The first quarter of 2021 saw the beginning of the 117th Congress and the debate and passage of the \$1.9 trillion American Recovery Plan (ARP). The Committee's legislative outreach efforts included over 130 meetings with Members of Congress and staff from more than 90 congressional offices.

During the legislative debate over the ARP, the Committee convened and briefed roughly two dozen members, from both parties and chambers. This included giving an overview about the status of previous COVID-relief efforts, how the legislation being considered could be better targeted, and our long-term fiscal outlook.

Following the passage of the ARP, we continued amplifying our message on the need to pivot to responsible budgeting. On March 25, 2021, Committee president Maya MacGuineas [testified](#) before the Senate Budget Committee about options for additional revenue from high-income taxpayers and corporations, as well as spending restraint to improve the country's fiscal outlook.



*Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC) speaks on the floor of the U.S. Senate on February 2, 2021, using a chart and data from the Committee's COVID Money Tracker.*

## Timely Trusted Analysis

Much of the Committee's analyses so far this year have focused on the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic's fiscal and legislative responses. This work included an analysis of [Five Ways to Improve the House version of the \\$1.9 trillion COVID Relief Package](#), [how much aid has gone to state and local governments](#), and a [comparison](#) of President Biden's and the Senate Republican's relief plans. Our [summary](#) of what was in the ARP attracted almost 150,000 online views.

We also published our bread-and-butter analyses on the fiscal situation and budget procedures, including our [Budget Reconciliation 101 FAQ](#) and the [Congressional Budget Office's Long-Term Budget Outlook](#), which shows debt exceeding double the size of the economy within 30 years.

### 5 Ways to Improve the House COVID Relief Package

- Remove or offset unrelated policies.
- Right-size state and local aid to match need.
- Better target rebates based on need.
- Extend and taper expanded unemployment benefits.
- Establish triggers so aid matches needs of the economy.

As part of [COVID Money Tracker](#), we provided critical analysis to lawmakers and the public [explaining the ARP's contents](#). We also demonstrated that many parts of the bill were well-targeted, but its overall size was larger than necessary to close the economic output gap.

Lastly, we illustrated that the \$1.9 trillion [ARP could set the stage for \\$4 trillion of debt](#) if some temporary elements of the bill are extended or made permanent.



# Trust Fund Solvency

*"This debt trajectory leaves us vulnerable on many fronts: it leaves people who depend on these important trust fund programs vulnerable given all the uncertainty; it leaves the economy vulnerable to economic shifts both here and abroad; and it creates a major national security threat as well."*

– Committee president Maya MacGuineas testifying before the Senate Budget Committee on March 25, 2021

With four of the nation's trust funds – Highway, Medicare Hospital Insurance, Social Security Disability Insurance, and Social Security Old Age and Survivors Insurance – heading toward insolvency within the next decade, the Committee launched the Trust Fund Solutions Initiative. As part of the Initiative, we published a [paper](#) that describes the challenges facing the four significant trust funds and the benefits of restoring them to solvency, as well as two pieces showing options to address the highway and Medicare funds.

# Health Savers Initiative



Senators Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Mike Crapo (R-ID) speaking at ["New Ideas to Lower Health Care Costs."](#) Hosted on March 17 as part of the Health Savers Initiative, this event brought together policymakers and experts to discuss potential policy interventions that should be on the health care policy agenda.

The [Health Savers Initiative](#), a collaborative project of the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, Arnold Ventures, and West Health, published its first three policy-ready options designed to lower health care costs economy-wide, reduce the cost of health care and its impact on families, and save money for the federal government. The briefs focused on [capping hospital prices](#), [reducing Medicare Advantage overpayments](#), and [equalizing Medicare payments regardless of site-of-care](#). Following publication, the Committee began meeting with Members of Congress and their staff about these and other options to achieve health care savings.

To learn more about the Health Savers Initiative, please visit:  
<https://www.crfb.org/project/health-savers-initiative>





# FixUS

FixUS spent the first months of 2021 continuing to engage Americans and societal leaders to better understand the roots of our divisions, distrust, and dysfunction in our democracy.

In February, FixUS released a [new report](#) consisting of former elected and appointed officials' answers to a simple question: "Why is Governing no Longer Good Politics?" The report's contributors have a combined 1,000 years of public service spanning every presidential administration from John F. Kennedy to Donald J. Trump. Since its release, it has been featured on CNN and in the [Financial Times](#), with opinion pieces running in multiple local outlets around the country, including the [Albany Times-Union](#), [Kansas City Star](#), [Seattle Times](#), [South Florida Sun Sentinel](#), [Chattanooga Times Free Press](#), [Bristol Herald Courier](#), [Yakima Herald](#), and [Grand Island Independent](#).



FixUS has also continued to engage Americans as part of our [National Dialogue on Common Values, Goals, and Aspirations](#), where we host small group discussions that crowdsource opinions on Americans' shared values and challenges.

We rely on individual contributions to fund vital and timely projects such as [COVID Money Tracker](#), [Trust Fund Solvency Initiative](#), and [FixUS](#). If you find these projects helpful, please consider supporting our work by contacting Chris Rotella, Director of Development, at [rotella@crfb.org](mailto:rotella@crfb.org) or call 202-596-3596 for additional information.

**Support Our Work**

## Public Engagement

More than 1,000 viewers have participated in at least one of our virtual events this year. From webinars and deep dives to Q&As with thought leaders, the Committee's virtual events are engaging audiences on a multitude of levels.



March 17th, 2021 – "New Ideas to Lower Health Care Costs" featured Senate Finance Committee Chairman Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Ranking Member Mike Crapo (R-ID), as well as a panel of experts discussing necessary policy interventions that should be on the health care policy agenda. The event is part of the Committee's Health Savers Initiative.



February 26th, 2021 - FixUS hosted a briefing on the 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer, which details the current state of trust (or lack thereof) in societal institutions worldwide.



February 11th, 2021 – "What Can You Do with Budget Reconciliation" featured a panel of experts, two former staff members of the Senate Budget Committee, as they discussed how reconciliation works and what it might mean for potential COVID relief legislation.