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March 31, 2015

The Honorable Reid Ribble
1513 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kurt Schrader
2431 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Ribble and Representative Schrader,

The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget writes to express our support for a two-year budget cycle, the primary objective of the Biennial Budgeting and Enhanced Oversight Act of 2015 (H.R. 1610), that you have introduced.

The primary benefit of a biennial budget cycle is the extra time it permits Congress and the White House to take a more careful look at our budget and federal programs, particularly those currently on auto-pilot. In doing so, Congress would have more time to conduct appropriate oversight and executive branch agencies are more able to ensure that appropriated funds are spent wisely and effectively.

By eliminating the time-consuming process of producing budget requests and justifications each year, Congress could undertake a review of broader budgetary issues. This could include a more careful review of national priorities compared to our national needs or an assessment of policies over the long term. Further, biennial budgeting would provide agencies with funding stability, while preventing them from incurring un-needed payments for fear of reductions in the following year's budget.

While switching to a biennial budget cycle would be beneficial, policymakers must ensure that a biennial system is flexible in response to unforeseen events that occur over the longer budget timespan. For example, policymakers could implement a process for amending or modifying the budget resolution during the second year, depending on changing circumstances, such as an increase in the deficit or economic downturn.

While budget process reforms are important, they are not a replacement for the tough budget policy choices that need to be made to address our long term fiscal challenges. However, H.R. 1610 is a step in the right direction. Moving to a biennial system could provide the time needed to address more fundamental fiscal policy decisions.

Sincerely,

Maya MacGuineas

President, Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget



CC: Chairman Tom Price, Ranking Member Chris Van Hollen