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**CRFB Reminder to Congress: Don't Forget to File Your Budget
April 14, 2010**

While millions of Americans will meet Thursday's deadline for filing their federal income tax returns, the 535 members of Congress will be ignoring the deadline to enact the annual budget resolution. April 15 is not only the tax deadline, it is the date by which Congress must pass a broad outline detailing how it intends to spend the money taxpayers send to Washington. Yet policymakers show no signs that they will get the job done.

"Neither filing taxes nor passing a federal budget should be optional," said Maya MacGuineas, president of the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget. "Taxpayers face stiff penalties for their failure to file, but members of Congress face no such punishment when they fail to pass a budget. Without a budget, the country is flying blind."

Missing budget deadlines is not a new development. Between FY1976 and FY2010, Congress met the deadline only six times, according to CRS. But this year, congressional leaders are considering not even attempting to pass a broad spending blueprint. Instead, they may abandon the "regular order" and simply "deem" an agreed-upon figure for the Appropriations Committees to use to allocate the discretionary pot of money.

Once again, Congress will have ducked an opportunity to address the long-term fiscal issues threatening our future. If the federal debt continues to grow—and on its current path it most certainly will—investors eventually will lose faith in the U.S.'s ability to manage its finances and will demand higher returns on U.S. securities. This could lead to either an abrupt fiscal crisis, or a slow and ongoing erosion of our standard of living. Neither should be seen as an acceptable outcome.

The current budget process, in which policymakers can easily evade making difficult decisions, clearly is not working. We need to fix the broken process so that it can confront the nation's fiscal problems, not contribute to them. The Peter G. Peterson Foundation, The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget have established The Peterson-Pew Commission on Budget Reform to help improve the budget process. Later this year the commission will offer recommendations on how to improve the process so tough choices cannot be ignored. "Lawmakers owe it to taxpayers to do their job and produce a sound budget on time," added MacGuineas.