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CRFB: Take the Best of Both Budget Resolutions April 15, 2015

The House of Representatives appointed conferees for the concurrent budget resolution last night, and the Senate is expected to do so later today. Informal negotiations have already begun. As conferees work toward a concurrent budget resolution, the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget urges conferees to adopt the most fiscal responsible parts of each resolution, maximizing the opportunity for future deficit reduction. Specifically, CRFB believes a concurrent budget resolution should do the following:

1) Include reconciliation instructions for all committees. Given the need to slow the growth of entitlement spending, the budget conference should adopt the House's approach to reconciliation – instructing every committee dealing with mandatory programs to find at least some savings. This way, Congress has maximum flexibility to enact deficit reduction from across the budget, allowing it to act on the mandatory savings assumed in the budget resolution, or a smaller set of savings with broader bipartisan support. At a minimum, reconciliation legislation could be used to enact savings to offset the costs of the recently passed SGR fix and any potential sequester relief.

2) Provide for honest sequester relief instead of relying on budget gimmicks to circumvent budget discipline. There appears to be broad support on both sides of the aisle for increasing spending above the current budget caps. However, many in Congress have supported using budget gimmicks to increase spending, rather than responsibly paying for sequester relief. These two gimmicks include uncapped war spending accounts (known as Overseas Contingency Operations, or OCO) and phony reductions in mandatory spending (known as Changes in Mandatory Programs, or CHIMPs). The concurrent budget resolution should maintain the Senate version's limits on these two gimmicks. Instead of relying on gimmicks to circumvent budget discipline, the conference report should provide flexibility for fiscally responsible sequester relief so Congress can offset any increases in discretionary spending with smarter savings.

3) Retain important budget process reforms. The House and Senate-passed budget resolutions each includes provisions to constrain use of various budget gimmicks, increase transparency within the budget, and focus attention on the long term. CRFB recently released a paper describing many of these changes, which can be read [here](#). We hope these provisions are included in the conference report.



Adopting a budget resolution conference report is an important step to establish fiscal discipline. But it is even more important that Congress follow through with enforcing the spending levels and revenue floor set in the budget. Absent a true emergency, passing legislation contrary to the budget undermines the credibility of the resolution and the entire budget process.

For a more detailed look at our recommendations to the budget conference committee, see our blog [A Budget Conference - Now What?](#)

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