



Federal Budget Process

The following timeline varies from year to year. Each subcommittee moves at its own pace and some bills will make it to the president's desk before others move very far. This timeline is meant to give a general idea of the federal budget process:

- February:** President submits his “budget request” on the first Monday in February. The President’s Budget is a proposal for the coming fiscal year, beginning on October 1st and running through September 30th of the following year.
- March:** House and Senate Budget Committees draft and vote on a budget resolution. The “budget resolution” is a framework for making budget decisions about spending and taxes. It does not set binding spending amounts for particular programs.
- Subcommittees hold public hearings on the budget proposals for each federal agency.
- House votes first on House Budget Resolution. Senate follows with a committee vote and then a floor vote.
- April:** A House-Senate conference committee resolves the differences between the two budget resolutions and both chambers vote on the budget report. The congressional deadline to complete the budget is April 15.
- Based on the budget resolution, congressional leaders develop funding parameters for each of the 12 appropriations subcommittees. Subcommittees continue to hold public hearings.
- June:** Subcommittees mark-up the appropriations bills, meaning, they recommend and vote on funding amounts for their categories. House subcommittees mark-up and then Senate subcommittees mark-up.
- July:** Full House Appropriations Committee votes on each subcommittee mark-up.
- Full Senate Appropriations Committee votes on each subcommittee mark-up.



- August:** Congress recesses typically for 3-4 weeks in August. Members are typically accessible at their district offices.
- September:** Full House votes on each of the 13 appropriations bills followed by a full Senate vote on each bill.
- A House-Senate conference committee (one per bill) resolves differences between the House and Senate bills. Each chamber then votes on the conference report.
- President signs each bill into law.
- October:** October 1: the appropriations process is complete after the president signs each appropriations bill. However, the process is generally not complete at that time. If the process is incomplete, Congress will pass “continuing resolutions” (CRs) providing federal department and agencies the authority to spend money on a short-term basis. These CRs must be passed by both chambers and signed by the president.
- December** If work finalizing appropriations remains uncompleted, Congress may roll all remaining appropriations bills into one massive bill called an “omnibus appropriations,” which is negotiated by the president and congressional leaders and passed through each chamber of Congress.

Additional information on reconciliation:

Senate: In the Senate, reconciliation is a process where contentious bills are considered with debate limited to twenty hours.

House: In the House of Representatives, because the House regularly passes rules that constrain debate and amendments, the process has less of an impact.

Budget reconciliation: This is a provision in the budget resolution that directs one or more committees to submit legislation changing existing law in order to bring spending, revenues or the debt-limit into conformity with the budget resolution.

Reconciliation bill: Contains changes in law recommended pursuant to reconciliation instructions in a budget resolution. If the instructions pertain to only one committee in a chamber, that committee reports the reconciliation bill. If the instructions pertain to more than one committee, the House Budget Committee reports an omnibus reconciliation bill, but it may not make substantive changes in the recommendations of the other committees.