

A unified budget—a real budget—can empower members and enable coherent management

The disjointed congressional budget process blocks legislators from contributing.

- Congress' annual budget process only covers discretionary spending in any detail.
 - Appropriations are ~30% of federal spending and shrinking, but they are broken up and are increasingly closed to floor amendments, especially between subcommittee bills.
 - Mandatory spending is twice as large and growing, but members have no inclusive—and anticipated—way to adjust direct spending and revenue policies.
- Major trust fund programs will be depleted in the next fifteen years, but members have no regularized path to pursue solvency and other improvements.
- The budget resolution mostly supports messaging and reinforces divides.
- Deficits and trust fund imbalances keep growing.
- The annual process forces members to vote for or against legislation on which they had little, if any, input and while they are against a shutdown and/or holiday deadline.
- Coalitions to enact appropriations routinely exclude certain members.

A unified budget is an important part of the solution.

What is a unified budget?

- A real budget: all spending (discretionary and mandatory) and all revenue amounts—and any changes—are in one annual budget bill. Many states already do this routinely.
- Appropriations Committees would bundle direct spending and revenue levels and proposed changes

from authorizers with appropriations bills in the full Appropriations Committee markup. Appropriations would incorporate authorizing committee levels and proposals without substantive changes.

- Members' floor amendments could adjust priorities across all areas.

Why is a unified budget better?

- Gives members of all committees a greater stake in a successful annual process.
- Empowers members to take ownership of budget priorities and outcomes.
- Provides effective vehicle to pursue budget goals and targets.
- Reveals tradeoffs across fiscal policies, helps reduce overlap and fragmentation.
- Allows routine correction of imbalances with cover from other budget areas.
- Expands potential coalitions for budget and appropriations legislation.
- Frees up floor time for other legislation to update and improve programs.

A unified budget is far better than a leadership-driven omnibus deal.

- Includes all line items as a matter of course, not just extenders and other ad hoc changes.
- Lets members channel their unique talents in committees and on the floor.
- Increases mutual benefits for members by involving them in multiple stages of the process.
- Strengthens Congress' power of the purse and helps reclaim other legislative powers.

Read more: <https://americansforprosperity.org/congressional-budgeting-is-a-mess-heres-the-fix/>