



HOUSE
BUDGET
COMMITTEE

Budget Digest

Chairman Steve Womack

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THE DIMINISHED ROLE OF THE BUDGET COMMITTEES

One of the visible signs that the budget and appropriations process is broken and badly in need of reform is the role of the Budget Committees in the overall process. Members of the Joint Select Committee on Budget and Appropriations Process Reform have discussed bolstering the role of the Budget Committees. Additionally, they have expressed concerns regarding budget scorekeeping, including more transparency throughout the broader process.

SIGNS OF THE PROBLEM

- **Term Limits:** The House Budget Committee is one of the only standing House committees with term limits for members. According to House Rules, members are limited to serving on the Budget Committee for no more than four of six successive Congresses. This constraint not only limits substantive learning, but it means that those members who garner significant budget expertise are eventually removed from the process.
- **Size:** The *Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974* (Budget Act) originally required the House Budget Committee to consist of 23 members, but membership has steadily increased over the years to 36 members in the 115th Congress. While membership includes various designees to represent the priorities of leadership and other committees, more voices in the process has not yielded better results.
- **Composition:** By statute and House Rules, the House Budget Committee must include five members from Appropriations, five from Ways and Means, one from Rules, one from majority leadership, and one from minority leadership. While 11 other members serve on other standing committees, there are valuable perspectives often missing when congressional leaders – including other Committee chairmen and ranking members – are not brought into the budget process.
- **Lack of Outside Participation:** Even if members do not serve on the House Budget Committee, they are encouraged to participate in the budget-writing process by submitting their ideas. Unfortunately, fewer and fewer members choose to utilize that opportunity or even recognize that it is available to them.

THE NEED FOR REFORM

“In the template that was the Budget Act, the Budget Committee as a coordinating function and as a consolidator and as handling the reconciliation process made perfect sense. Like much of this, it just hasn't worked out so well, so that suggests that some change does make sense.”

- Douglas Holtz-Eakin, American Action Forum
April 17, 2018, Hearing Remarks

“It was irresistible for some in our group to suggest eliminating the [Budget] Committees; however, we agreed that the stature of the committees needs to be restored to help improve their ability to lead the process.”

- Matt Owens, Convergence Building a Better Budget Process Project
May 9, 2018, Hearing Remarks