



CRS Report for Congress

Congressional Budget Resolutions: Reporting Deadline in the Senate

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Summary

The House and Senate are required under the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 to complete action each year on a budget resolution before spending, revenue, and debt-limit legislation can be considered. In order to facilitate timeliness in the congressional budget process, Section 300 of the 1974 act establishes a timetable that requires the Senate Budget Committee to report a budget resolution by April 1 and the House and Senate to reach final agreement on a budget resolution by April 15. (Prior to FY1987, the deadline for reporting the budget resolution was April 15 and the deadline for its final adoption was May 15.)

During the 34 years that the congressional budget process has been in effect, the Senate Budget Committee has reported 32 budget resolutions subject to the April deadline. (The budget resolutions for FY1991 and FY2002 were discharged from the committee.) On average, the 32 budget resolutions were reported about on the applicable deadline (e.g., within a fraction of a day late). Twenty of the 32 budget resolutions were reported in a timely manner, about 12.6 days before the deadline, on average. The remaining 12 budget resolutions were reported after the deadline, by about 21.3 days, on average. This report will be updated as developments warrant.

Under the congressional budget process established by the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 (P.L. 93-344, as amended), the House and Senate are required to adopt a budget resolution each year before spending, revenue, and debt-limit legislation can be considered, unless a waiver or exception applies. The budget resolution serves as a framework that constrains action on subsequent budgetary legislation.¹ The congressional budget process has been in effect for 34 years, covering FY1976-FY2009.

¹ The congressional budget process is discussed in more detail in CRS Report 98-721, *Introduction to the Federal Budget Process*, by Robert Keith. See also CRS Report RL30297, *Congressional Budget Resolutions: Selected Statistics and Information Guide*, by Bill Heniff Jr. and Justin Murray.

The 1974 Congressional Budget Act originally required the House and Senate to adopt two budget resolutions each year, a “first” budget resolution in the spring and a “second” one in the fall, just before the beginning of the fiscal year. The first budget resolution set advisory targets that guided action on budgetary measures while the second budget resolution set binding limits. Congress abandoned the practice of adopting a second budget resolution after the FY1982 budget cycle and formally repealed the requirement as part of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (Title II of P.L. 99-177, as amended).

In order to promote timely action in the congressional budget process, the 1974 Congressional Budget Act set forth a timetable in Section 300. Under the original timetable, the House and Senate were required to reach final agreement on the budget resolution by May 15. In furtherance of this objective, the House and Senate Budget Committees were required to report the first budget resolution by April 15 each year.

The congressional budget process timetable was revised by the 1985 Balanced Budget Act. In an effort to spur more timely action, the deadline for adoption of the budget resolution was advanced from May 15 to April 15. Further, the Senate Budget Committee was required to report the budget resolution by April 1. (The reporting deadline for the House Budget Committee was eliminated instead of being revised.)² These changes first took effect in 1986 for the FY1987 budget cycle.

Table 1 indicates, for each fiscal year from FY1976-FY2009, the number of the first budget resolution reported in the Senate, the Senate report number, and the date the budget resolution was reported. Thirty-two budget resolutions were reported during the 34-year period.

In two instances (FY1991 and FY2002), the Senate Budget Committee was discharged from the further consideration of the budget resolution. The FY1991 budget resolution, S.Con.Res. 110, was discharged on Monday, April 2, 1990, and subsequently considered by the Senate. The committee reported another budget resolution, S.Con.Res. 129, the following month, but it was not considered and is not counted for purposes of **Table 1**. For FY2002, the Senate Budget Committee did not mark up or report a budget resolution. Instead, the House-passed budget resolution (H.Con.Res. 83), which had been referred to the Senate Budget Committee on March 28, 2001, was discharged on Monday, April 2 and later considered by the Senate.

In nine instances (FY1988, FY1993, FY1998, and FY2004-FY2009), the Senate Budget Committee did not submit a written report to accompany the budget resolution. For FY2004-FY2009, the Senate Budget Committee issued a committee print in lieu of a written report.

² The change was made in Section 201(b) of the 1985 act; see 99 *Stat.* 1040.

**Table 1. First Budget Resolutions Reported by
the Senate Budget Committee: FY1976-FY2009**

Fiscal Year	Budget Resolution (S.Con.Res.)	Senate Report Number	Date Reported	Comment
April 15 Reporting Deadline				
1976	32	94-77	04-15-75	—
1977	109	94-731	04-01-76	—
1978	19	95-90	04-12-77	—
1979	80	95-739	04-14-78	—
1980	22	96-68	04-12-79	—
1981	86	96-654	04-09-80	—
1982	19	97-49	05-01-81	—
1983	92	97-385	05-10-82	—
1984	27	98-63	04-24-83	—
1985	106	98-399	04-18-84	—
1986	32	99-15	03-20-85	—
April 1 Reporting Deadline				
1987	120	99-264	03-24-86	—
1988	49	—	04-15-87	No written report.
1989	113	100-311	03-31-88	—
1990	30	101-20	04-27-89	—
1991	110	—	—	S.Con.Res. 110 was discharged from the committee on 04-02-90 and placed on the calendar. Another budget resolution, S.Con.Res. 129, was reported on 05-10-90 but not considered.
1992	29	102-40	04-18-91	—
1993	106	—	04-03-92	No written report.
1994	18	103-19	03-12-93	—
1995	63	103-238	03-18-94	—
1996	13	104-82	05-15-95	—
1997	57	104-271	05-13-96	—

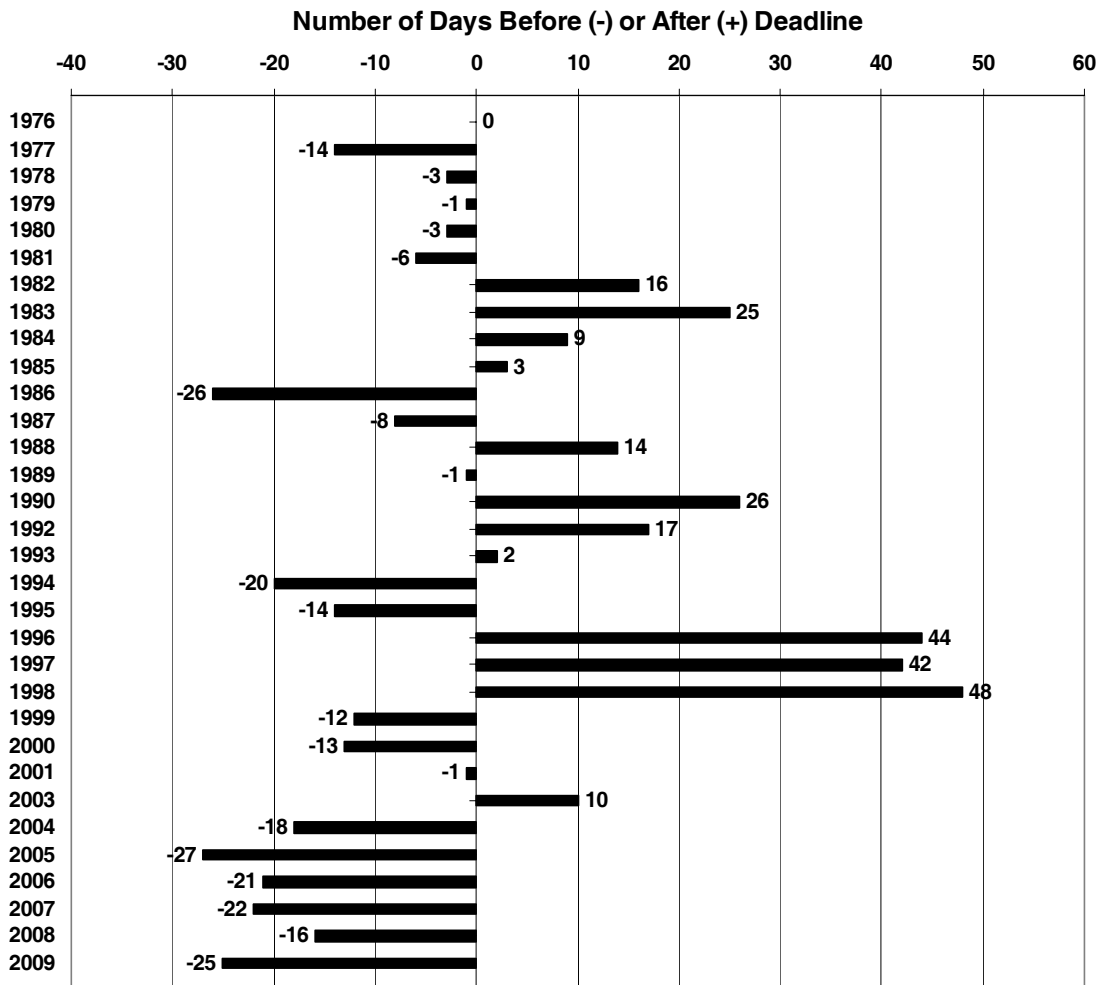
Fiscal Year	Budget Resolution (S.Con.Res.)	Senate Report Number	Date Reported	Comment
1998	27	—	05-19-97	No written report.
1999	86	105-170	03-20-98	—
2000	20	106-27	03-19-99	—
2001	101	106-251	03-31-00	—
2002	—	—	—	Committee did not mark up or report a budget resolution. Instead, the House-passed budget resolution, H.Con.Res. 83, was discharged from the Senate Budget Committee on 04-02-01 and placed on the calendar.
2003	100	107-141	04-11-02	—
2004	23	—	03-14-03	No written report. Committee issued a committee print, S.Prt. 108-19, in lieu of a written report.
2005	95	—	03-05-04	No written report. Committee issued a committee print, S.Prt. 108-365, in lieu of a written report.
2006	18	—	03-11-05	No written report. Committee issued a committee print, S.Prt. 109-18, in lieu of a written report.
2007	83	—	03-10-06	No written report. Committee issued a committee print, S.Prt. 109-057, in lieu of a written report.
2008	21	—	03-16-07	No written report. Committee issued a committee print, S.Prt. 110-019, in lieu of a written report.
2009	70	—	03-07-08	No written report. Committee issued a committee print, S.Prt. 110-039, in lieu of a written report.

Source: Prepared by the Congressional Research Service.

Figure 1 provides information on the reporting of the budget resolutions relative to the deadline. The 32 budget resolutions were reported, on average, about on the deadline (e.g., within a fraction of a day late). Twenty of the budget resolutions were reported in a timely manner. The reporting date for these budget resolutions ranged from zero to 27 days before the deadline and averaged 12.6 days before the deadline. The remaining 12 budget resolutions were reported from two to 48 days after the deadline, averaging 21.3 days after the deadline.

Compliance with the original deadline of April 15 (in effect through FY1986) was about the same as compliance with the revised deadline of April 1 (in effect beginning with FY1987). Under both deadlines, the budget resolution was reported, on average, about on the deadline (e.g., within a fraction of a day late). The minor difference between the two averages obscures the significantly tardy reporting of the budget resolutions for FY1996-FY1998, which were reported between 42 days and 48 days after the deadline. Following these three years of tardy reporting of the budget resolution, the measure has been reported on time in nine of 10 years.

Figure 1. Number of Days Budget Resolutions Were Reported by the Senate Budget Committee Before or After the Reporting Deadline: FY1976-FY2009



Source: Prepared by the Congressional Research Service.

Note: The reporting deadline was April 15 for FY1976-FY1986 and April 1 for FY1987 and thereafter. The Senate Budget Committee did not report a budget resolution for FY1991 or FY2002. For FY1991, the Senate Budget Committee was discharged from the further consideration of the budget resolution (S.Con.Res. 110), which was placed on the calendar on Monday, April 2, 1990, and considered by the Senate. (The committee reported another budget resolution, S.Con.Res. 129, the following month, but it was not considered and is not counted for purposes of **Figure 1**.) For FY2002, the Senate Budget Committee did not mark up a budget resolution. Instead, the House-passed budget resolution (H.Con.Res. 83), which had been referred to the Senate Budget Committee on March 28, 2001, was discharged on Monday April 2 and later considered by the Senate.