

Statement for Rep. William Timmons (SC-04)
House Committee on the Budget
Member Day, March 23, 2021

Chairman Yarmuth and Ranking Member Smith, thank you for your leadership on this Committee and for holding today's Member Day Hearing to listen to the concerns and priorities of Members of Congress. I appreciate the opportunity to discuss some of the budget recommendations made by the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress.

The Select Committee made over 90 recommendations to the House last year, including recommendations involving the budget process and how it can be improved.

Our founding fathers separated the powers given to each branch of government. Congress was given the "power of the Purse" and controlled our nation's entire annual budget and funding process for years. However, the creation of an initial budget was eventually moved from Congress to the Executive Branch, and this is the system we still use today.

However, the budget process today rarely follows the system initially established. As noted in our Committee's Final Report, it is more like "regular disorder." One of the more radical changes from congressional procedure is the lack of regular order in our budget and appropriations process. Instead, Congress and the President tend to rely on omnibus legislation and continuing resolutions, as we all have seen. Congress has failed and is failing to meet its Article One duties, and one of the clearest examples we have is the worsening of the budget and appropriations process.

One of the recommendations made by the Select Committee is to require a biennial budget resolution, while maintaining the annual appropriations bills.

Unfortunately, over the last several years, the budget resolution has become more and more a partisan document, used by both sides of the aisle to emphasize their own policy preferences, and in some cases, a political maneuver for Senate passage of non-budget related bills. When the budget process is intentionally delayed and used for political purposes, it delays the incredibly important and Constitutionally mandated responsibilities of Congress. If we were to require a biennial budget resolution while maintaining annual appropriations bills, the process would be more efficient and we would be able to plan ahead, avoiding unnecessary delays.

A biennial budget resolution would also give Congress ample time to conduct oversight on federal agencies and departments. When both appropriators and authorizers have more certainty, they are able to give more attention to those bodies they fund and oversee. This allows Congress to better ensure that appropriated funds - taxpayer dollars - are being used responsibly and that authorized programs are carried out in line with congressional intent.

In line with requiring a biennial budget resolution, a realistic deadline for Congress to complete action on a biennial budget is also needed.

Congress has consistently failed to adopt a budget resolution by the deadline in statute, April 15th. As you know, we will once again fail to meet this deadline this year. The current deadline does not reflect a realistic timeline and only further delays the budget process. A later deadline

for the first year of the biennium would give Congress sufficient time and opportunities to finish its work.

Simply requiring a biennial budget resolution does not immediately fix the problems that we face in Congress, but it is a step in the right direction. But in order to maximize taxpayer dollars and ensure that congressional intent is implemented, the Budget and Appropriations Committees should adopt biennial budget resolutions going forward.

A two-year budget will also allow us to take a good look at our spending and our budget deficits. With our national debt quickly reaching \$30 trillion, a biennial budget provides the opportunity to correct course and become good stewards of taxpayer dollars, rather than relying on eleventh hour continuing resolutions or bloated omnibus bills that only further exacerbate the problems at hand.

As a former member of the Budget Committee, I understand the unique challenges of the work its members do, and I believe a biennial budget would help us overcome some of the challenges facing us today.

The congressional budget and appropriations process as it stands today is in desperate need of reform. Delays and worse - inaction - have become the norm. The unfortunate results are not just ineffectiveness and a lack of accountability of Congress. They are increased delays throughout Congress as a whole and strained relationships with the executive branch. Vital legislation is forced to the sidelines as we hurriedly try to fund the government through omnibus bills and CRs. And without on time, individual appropriations bills, federal programs and agencies are hamstrung by the uncertainty of future funding.

One of Congress' core responsibilities outlined in Article One of the Constitution is allocating funds for the federal government, and it is not currently meeting that key responsibility. By adopting these recommendations that both Chair Kilmer and I have spoken about, we can begin to remove the roadblocks that have only furthered delays and polarization in this body.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today. I hope that moving forward the Select Committee can be a resource to you and I look forward to working with you this Congress to help reform our budget process and make Congress work more efficiently.