

5 Ways Congress Should Respond Now that Trillion-Dollar Deficits Are Coming

It's official: the era of permanent trillion-dollar federal deficits is coming and skyrocketing debt is upon us.

If you have kids, if you're planning your retirement, if you own a small business, the recent report from the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office should scare you.

The report says our national debt and federal deficits are growing much faster than we previously thought. By 2020, we'll be adding over a trillion dollars a year to the national debt. The accumulation of these deficits will drive up the publicly held debt by over \$13 trillion over the next decade.

But there is still hope. Congress and the President need to get the message and work together to enact significant reforms that put the debt and deficit on a sustainable path.

Here are 5 ways Congress should respond to the new report:

1. **Acknowledge the problem.** The new report is a warning that our nation is in serious financial trouble. This isn't just a campaign issue or a TV ad; it's a profound threat to our future and to our children's future. *Every single member of Congress needs to acknowledge the seriousness of the problem and their own responsibility to address it.*
2. **Stop adding to the debt.** It may be glaringly obvious but when you've dug yourself into a deep debt hole, it's time to stop digging. In 2010 Congress passed a pay-as-you-go law to ensure that all tax cuts and mandatory spending increases were paid for and didn't add to the debt. But that law has been consistently ignored, waived, or circumvented. They need to stick to it.
3. **Get started on solutions.** Agree on a goal to start reducing the debt and get started. That means making tough choices to fix our broken tax code and slow the growth of our entitlement programs. We should also strengthen Social Security for generations to come. No need to wait for a comprehensive solution - every path starts with a first step. Congress should start taking steps towards those solutions.
4. **Work together.** Bipartisanship is fundamental to solving our nation's fiscal problems. We all know it; they all know it. It's time to lay down the swords, let go of sacred cows, and work together for our common good.
5. **Respect the budget process.** OK, we know it's boring. But how Congress and the President develop the budget really matters. Controls and deadlines built into the process are regularly ignored; short-term fixes and gimmicks are the new normal. Congress should live by its own rules and adopt new ways to ensure fiscal discipline.