



Open Letter to Congress: Timely Information Essential for Accurate Scorekeeping

Dear Members of Congress:

We write to urge your support for the “Increasing Baseline Updates Act,” [H.R. 9716](#), a bipartisan bill cosponsored by Reps. Blake Moore (R-UT), Thomas Suozzi (D-NY), Ron Estes (R-KS), and Ralph Norman (R-SC). This legislation would enhance the ability of the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) to produce and update its annual budget baseline by mandating that the executive branch provide critical data to CBO by February 1. H.R. 9716 also requires CBO to produce at least two updates to its baseline each year. These reforms would ensure lawmakers have access to more timely and accurate fiscal data.

CBO’s annual baseline, a ten-year projection of the budget and economy based largely on current law, is generally published in January or February. It serves as a fundamental benchmark for evaluating the fiscal impact of legislative proposals, with updates released in the spring and late summer to reflect changes in enacted laws and economic conditions.

The baseline is often delayed because Congress and the President do not complete work on the budget in a timely manner. However, it can also be delayed because the White House’s Office of Management and Budget (OMB) does not provide key data from across federal departments and agencies to CBO as soon as it could. Currently, this data is only made available to CBO at the same time the budget is released to the public.

The “Increasing Baseline Updates Act” addresses this issue by requiring OMB to provide relevant technical data to CBO by February 1 each year, enabling CBO to finalize its budget baseline more quickly. It would also require CBO, to the extent practicable, to provide at least two baseline updates to Congress. Typically, CBO will produce one or two updates, but, under the “Increasing Baseline Updates Act,” this would become the minimum. More frequent baseline updates would also improve the accuracy of legislative cost estimates, which are measured against the most recent baseline.

By expediting the availability of critical technical data and codifying baseline update requirements, this commonsense legislation ensures that Congress has the tools it needs to make informed budgetary decisions. As the national debt continues to grow, reforms for improved baselines and cost estimates will help lawmakers make progress towards sound fiscal management and accountability in government.

Sincerely,

National Taxpayers Union
R Street Institute
Taxpayers for Common Sense