



Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Congress of the United States

Bud Shuster
Chairman

House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

James L. Oberstar
Ranking Democratic Member

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May 11, 2000

Oppose H.R. 853! *Stand up for the House and ALL of its Members!*

Dear Colleague:

We write to strongly urge you to oppose H.R. 853, the Budget Process Reform bill. H.R. 853 changes the current non-binding concurrent resolution to a *joint* budget resolution that would be signed by the President and have the force of law. We believe that such a process would weaken the role of Congress (particularly the House of Representatives), authorizing committees, and rank-and-file Members.

We believe that involving the President in the congressional budget process means, in reality, shutting most Members of Congress out of the process. In practice, creating a budget resolution with the force of law means that budget targets and committee allocations would be negotiated by the Budget Committees, the House and Senate Leaderships, and the President, without the participation of authorizing committees or rank-and-file Members.

In addition to the budget being negotiated by the House and Senate Leaderships and the President, the bill eliminates Members' ability to alter this Leadership-negotiated package. Members would no longer have the ability to offer amendments to either the reconciliation instructions or the functional allocations assumed by the joint budget resolution because these items would now only be included in the report accompanying the law.

Finally, we are extremely concerned that once we head down the road of a statute implementing budget policy, the Budget Committees, the House and Senate Leaderships, and the President will use this must-pass legislative vehicle to legislate their agendas. Given the experiences of past budget summits, it is unlikely that this process will include authorizing committees, including those Members with the most specific issue expertise, or rank-and-file Members. We will simply be urged: "Don't break the deal"—a deal in which almost all of us will have had no input.

Do not be lulled into thinking that this bill simply changes a technical House procedure. This bill significantly alters the congressional budget process. The budget process is where we decide priorities for America's future. It is the process where, to a large degree, we decide what our values are, and put a price tag on them. It is a process in which all Members and all committees should play a role. H.R. 853 will shut Members out of that process.

Oppose H.R. 853!

Sincerely,

BUD SHUSTER
Chairman

JAMES L. OBERSTAR
Ranking Democratic Member

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