



## United States Senate Budget Committee

**JEFF SESSIONS** | Ranking Member

### No More Gimmicks, Tricks, Or Empty Promises

#### *America Deserves An Honest Budget*

The American people have a right to expect accountability, honesty, and responsibility from their government. But every year, Washington relies on a series of budget gimmicks and accounting tricks to conceal or enable deficit spending. With our nation's gross debt at more than \$15 trillion—larger than our entire economy—Washington must abandon these fiscal shell games and commit to honest budget practices.

That's why Ranking Members Sessions and Snowe introduced the Honest Budget Act (HBA) last year in the Senate, and why U.S. Rep. Martha Roby and her colleagues are introducing a companion bill in the House as members in both chambers join together to press for reform. This nine-part legislative package will put an end to some of Washington's most blatant and dishonest budget gimmicks. Since 2005 alone, the gimmicks addressed in the bill have enabled more than \$420 billion in deficit spending while fostering a wider culture of fiscal irresponsibility. The Honest Budget Act is a crucial step towards making Washington more responsible—and more accountable—with how it spends taxpayer dollars.

Examples Of HBA-Targeted Gimmicks:

#### **Spending Money Without A Budget**

For more than two consecutive years, the Democrat Senate has failed to adopt a budget. The Honest Budget Act sets in place a new sixty vote point-of-order threshold for trying to move an annual spending bill in the Senate unless a binding budget resolution has been agreed to.

#### **“Emergency” Spending**

Congress has added billions to the deficit by labeling routine expenditures as emergency spending, allowing lawmakers to bypass budgetary rules. For example, Congress included \$210 million in “emergency” spending for the 2010 Census. Under current procedure, the emergency designation is simply written into the bill text by a single lawmaker. The *Honest Budget Act* puts the burden on a supermajority of Congress to affirm it.

#### **Phony Rescissions**

Congress frequently rescinds money that was never going to be spent in the first place and then uses those “savings” to pay for increased spending elsewhere. For instance, if \$10 million has been appropriated to build a highway that turns out to cost only \$8 million to complete, Congress can rescind the \$2 million difference (that never left the Treasury), and use it to increase spending by \$2 million for an unrelated project. The *Honest Budget Act* ends this gimmick by prohibiting rescissions from being counted as spending cuts unless they produce actual cash savings over the budget window.

#### **Timing Shifts**

Bill drafters use timing shifts to get around the budget rules that prohibit legislation from increasing the deficit in certain enforcement periods. By shifting expenditures or tax due dates from one period to another, legislation can appear to be deficit neutral in all the enforceable time periods when it really isn't. Congress has used timing shifts to claim \$42 billion in bogus offsets since 2009. The *Honest Budget Act* would disallow these phony offsets from being used.