

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 5178

To amend the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 to provide for procedures to meet a target ratio of public debt to gross domestic product, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 19, 2019

Mr. BURCHETT (for himself, Mr. CASE, and Mr. WOMACK) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Rules, and in addition to the Committee on the Budget, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To amend the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 to provide for procedures to meet a target ratio of public debt to gross domestic product, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Reforming America’s
5 Fiscal Toolkit Act of 2019” or the “RAFT Act of 2019”.

1 **SEC. 2. RATIO OF PUBLIC DEBT TO GDP INCLUDED IN CON-**
2 **CURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 301(a) of the Congres-
4 sional Budget Act of 1974 is amended by striking “and”
5 at the end of paragraph (6), by striking the period and
6 inserting “; and” at the end of paragraph (7), and by add-
7 ing after paragraph (7) the following:

8 “(8) the recommended ratio of the public debt
9 to the estimated gross domestic product.”.

10 (b) DEFINITION OF GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT.—
11 Section 3 of the Congressional Budget and Impoundment
12 Control Act of 1974 is amended by adding at the end the
13 following new paragraph:

14 “(12) The term ‘gross domestic product’ means
15 the gross domestic product of the United States, as
16 determined by the Bureau of Economic Analysis of
17 the Department of Commerce.”.

18 **SEC. 3. INSTRUCTIONS TO COMMITTEES ON MEETING TAR-**
19 **GET RATIO OF PUBLIC DEBT TO GDP IN-**
20 **CLUDED IN CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON**
21 **THE BUDGET.**

22 (a) IN GENERAL.—Title III of the Congressional
23 Budget Act of 1974 is amended by adding at the end the
24 following:

1 “INSTRUCTIONS FOR RATIO OF THE PUBLIC DEBT TO
2 THE ESTIMATED GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT

3 “SEC. 316. (a) IN GENERAL.—A concurrent resolu-
4 tion on the budget for an even-numbered fiscal year shall
5 either—

6 “(1) include instructions to one or more committees
7 to determine and recommend changes in existing law nec-
8 essary to achieve the ratio of the public debt to the esti-
9 mated gross domestic product as set forth in that resolu-
10 tion; or

11 “(2) request that the Speaker and the minority leader
12 of the House of Representatives and majority and minor-
13 ity leaders of the Senate publish a statement in the Con-
14 gressional Record establishing the Joint Select Committee
15 on Fiscal Responsibility under section 317.

16 “(b) COMPLIANCE.—The committee or committees
17 (as the case may be) receiving instructions as described
18 in subsection (a) shall be deemed to have complied with
19 the required net reduction in the public debt set forth in
20 such instructions, as required by subsection (a), if—

21 “(1) the amount of changes are not less than
22 80 percent of the total amount of changes assigned
23 to the committee or committees (as the case may be)
24 in such instructions necessary to achieve the reduc-
25 tion in the debt; and

1 “(2) the chair of the Committees on the Budget
2 of the House of Representatives or the Senate, as
3 applicable, submits a statement to the Congressional
4 Record certifying that paragraph (1) has been com-
5 plied with.

6 “(c) FAILURE TO COMPLY.—The Committee on the
7 Budget of the House of Representatives or the Senate
8 shall recommend changes in existing law necessary to
9 achieve changes specified by directives described in sub-
10 section (a) contained in a concurrent resolution on the
11 budget if a minority of the committees so instructed fail
12 to submit recommended changes to its Committee on the
13 Budget pursuant to its instruction.

14 “(d) CBO ESTIMATES.—The Congressional Budget
15 Office shall provide estimates of the legislative text consid-
16 ered under this section in accordance with sections 308(a)
17 and 201(f).

18 “(e) LEGISLATIVE PROCEDURE.—If a concurrent
19 resolution containing directives to one or more committees
20 to determine and recommend changes in laws, bills, or res-
21 olutions is agreed to in accordance with subsection (a),
22 and—

23 “(1) only one committee of the House or the
24 Senate is directed to determine and recommend
25 changes, that committee shall promptly make such

1 determination and recommendations and report to
2 its House legislation containing such recommenda-
3 tions; or

4 “(2) more than one committee of the House or
5 the Senate is directed to determine and recommend
6 changes, each such committee so directed shall
7 promptly make such determination and rec-
8 ommendations and submit such recommendations to
9 the Committee on the Budget of its House, which
10 upon receiving all such recommendations, shall re-
11 port to its House legislation carrying out all such
12 recommendations.

13 “(f) EXPEDITED CONSIDERATION IN THE SENATE.—

14 “(1) MOTION TO PROCEED.—Notwithstanding
15 Rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, it
16 is in order, not later than 3 days of session after the
17 date on which a bill is reported pursuant to sub-
18 section (e) from all committees to which it was re-
19 ferred, for the majority leader of the Senate or the
20 majority leader’s designee to move to proceed to the
21 consideration of the bill. It shall also be in order for
22 any Member of the Senate to move to proceed to the
23 consideration of the bill at any time after the conclu-
24 sion of such 2-day period. A motion to proceed is in
25 order even though a previous motion to the same ef-

1 fect has been disagreed to. All points of order
2 against the motion to proceed to the bill are waived.
3 The motion to proceed is not debatable. The motion
4 is not subject to a motion to postpone. A motion to
5 reconsider the vote by which the motion is agreed to
6 or disagreed to shall not be in order. If a motion to
7 proceed to the consideration of the bill is agreed to,
8 the bill shall remain the unfinished business until
9 disposed of.

10 “(2) CONSIDERATION.—All points of order
11 against the bill and against consideration of the bill
12 are waived. Consideration of the bill and of all de-
13 batable motions and appeals in connection therewith
14 shall not exceed a total of 20 hours which shall be
15 divided equally between the majority and minority
16 leaders or their designees. A motion further to limit
17 debate on the bill is in order, shall require an af-
18 firmative vote of three-fifths of the Members duly
19 chosen and sworn, and is not debatable. Any debat-
20 able motion or appeal is debatable for not to exceed
21 1 hour, to be divided equally between those favoring
22 and those opposing the motion or appeal. All time
23 used for consideration of the bill, including time
24 used for quorum calls and voting, shall be counted
25 against the total 20 hours of consideration.

1 “(3) AMENDMENTS.—It shall not be in order in
2 the Senate to offer any amendments.

3 “(4) VOTE ON PASSAGE.—Passage of the bill
4 shall require an affirmative vote of a simple majority
5 of the Members, duly chosen and sworn.

6 “(5) RULINGS OF THE CHAIR ON PROCE-
7 DURE.—Appeals from the decisions of the Chair re-
8 lating to the application of the rules of the Senate,
9 as the case may be, to the procedure relating to a
10 bill shall be decided without debate.

11 “(g) CONSIDERATION BY THE SENATE.—

12 “(1) IN GENERAL.—If, before passing the bill
13 under this section, the Senate receives from the
14 House of Representatives a bill—

15 “(A) the bill of the House shall not be re-
16 ferred to a committee of jurisdiction; and

17 “(B) the procedure in the Senate shall be
18 the same as if no bill had been received from
19 the House until the vote on passage, when the
20 bill received from the House shall supplant the
21 bill of the Senate.

22 “(2) RULES TO COORDINATE ACTION.—

23 “(A) TREATMENT OF BILL.—If the Senate
24 fails to introduce or consider a bill under this

1 section, the bill of the House of Representatives
2 shall be entitled to expedited floor procedures.

3 “(B) VETOES.—If the President vetoes the
4 bill, debate on a veto message in the Senate
5 under this section shall be 1 hour equally di-
6 vided between the majority and minority leaders
7 or their designees.

8 “JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

9 “SEC. 317. (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—If by the earlier
10 of the date that a statement is published under section
11 316(a)(2) or the date that is the last day of the first ses-
12 sion of any Congress (beginning with the One Hundred
13 Seventeenth Congress) a bill is not enacted into law pursu-
14 ant to section 316, there is established a joint committee
15 of Congress to be known as the ‘Joint Select Committee
16 on Fiscal Responsibility’.

17 “(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

18 “(1) JOINT COMMITTEE.—The term ‘joint com-
19 mittee’ means the Joint Select Committee on Fiscal
20 Responsibility established under subsection (a).

21 “(2) JOINT COMMITTEE BILL.—The term ‘joint
22 committee bill’ means a bill consisting of the legisla-
23 tive text of the joint committee recommended under
24 subsection (d)(1)(B).

25 “(c) DUTIES; COMPLIANCE; RECOMMENDATIONS.—

1 “(1) DUTIES.—The duty of the joint committee
2 shall be to recommend changes in existing law to
3 achieve the ratio of the public debt to the estimated
4 gross domestic product in the most recently adopted
5 concurrent resolution on the budget.

6 “(2) COMPLIANCE.—The joint committee shall
7 be deemed to have complied with the required net
8 reduction in the public debt set forth in the instruc-
9 tions in the most recently adopted concurrent resolu-
10 tion on the budget, as required by section 316 of the
11 Congressional Budget Act of 1974 (as added by sec-
12 tion 301(b)(1))—

13 “(A) if the amount of changes are not less
14 than 80 percent of the total amount of changes
15 necessary to achieve the reduction in the debt;
16 and

17 “(B) the chairs of the Committees on the
18 Budget of the House of Representatives and the
19 Senate jointly submit a statement to the Con-
20 gressional Record certifying that subparagraph
21 (A) has been complied with.

22 “(d) REPORT, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND LEGISLA-
23 TIVE TEXT.—

24 “(1) IN GENERAL.—By April 30 of an odd-
25 numbered year, the joint committee shall vote on—

1 “(A) a report that contains a detailed
2 statement of the findings, conclusions, and rec-
3 ommendations of the joint committee and an
4 estimate of the Congressional Budget Office
5 pursuant to paragraph (6); and

6 “(B) legislative text to carry out such rec-
7 ommendations as described in the duties set
8 forth in subsection (c)(1).

9 “(2) APPROVAL.—The report of the joint com-
10 mittee and the legislative text described in para-
11 graph (1) shall only be approved upon receiving the
12 votes of—

13 “(A) a majority of joint committee mem-
14 bers appointed by the Speaker of the House of
15 Representatives and the leader of the Senate of
16 the same political party as the Speaker; and

17 “(B) a majority of joint committee mem-
18 bers appointed by the minority leader of the
19 House of Representatives and the leader of the
20 Senate of the same political party as the minor-
21 ity leader of the House of Representatives.

22 “(3) ADDITIONAL VIEWS.—A member of the
23 joint committee who gives notice of an intention to
24 file supplemental, minority, or additional views at
25 the time of the final joint committee vote on the ap-

1 proval of the report and legislative language under
2 paragraph (2) shall be entitled to 2 calendar days
3 after the day of such notice in which to file such
4 views in writing with the co-chairs. Such views shall
5 then be included in the joint committee report and
6 printed in the same volume, or part thereof, and
7 their inclusion shall be noted on the cover of the re-
8 port. In the absence of timely notice, the joint com-
9 mittee report may be printed and transmitted imme-
10 diately without such views.

11 “(4) TRANSMISSION OF REPORT AND LEGISLA-
12 TIVE TEXT.—If the report and legislative text are
13 approved by the joint committee pursuant to para-
14 graph (2), then not later than 10 days after the date
15 of such approval, the joint committee shall submit
16 its report and legislative text described in paragraph
17 (1) to the Speaker of the House of Representatives
18 and the majority and minority leaders of each House
19 of Congress.

20 “(5) REPORT AND LEGISLATIVE LANGUAGE TO
21 BE MADE PUBLIC.—Upon the approval or dis-
22 approval of the joint committee report and legislative
23 text pursuant to paragraph (2), the joint committee
24 shall promptly make the full report and legislative
25 text, and a record of the vote, available to the public.

1 “(6) CBO ESTIMATES.—The Congressional
2 Budget Office shall provide estimates of the legisla-
3 tive text considered under paragraph (1) in accord-
4 ance with sections 308(a) and 201(f).

5 “(7) LEGISLATIVE PROCEDURE.—The proce-
6 dures under section 316 shall apply to any legislative
7 text submitted under paragraph (1), except that
8 subsection (f)(4) of such section shall be applied by
9 substituting ‘three-fifths’ for ‘a simple majority’.

10 “(e) MEMBERSHIP.—

11 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The joint committee shall
12 be composed of 16 members appointed pursuant to
13 paragraph (2).

14 “(2) APPOINTMENT.—Members of the joint
15 committee shall be as follows:

16 “(A) Four members from among Members
17 of the Senate, of which one shall be a member
18 of the Committee on Finance and one shall be
19 a member of the Committee on the Budget, ap-
20 pointed by the majority leader of the Senate.

21 “(B) Four members from among Members
22 of the Senate, of which one shall be a member
23 of the Committee on Finance and one shall be
24 a member of the Committee on the Budget, ap-
25 pointed by the minority leader of the Senate.

1 “(C) Four members from among Members
2 of the House of Representatives, of which one
3 shall be a member of the Committee on Ways
4 and Means and one shall be a member of the
5 Committee on the Budget, appointed by the
6 Speaker of the House of Representatives.

7 “(D) Four members from among Members
8 of the House of Representatives, of which one
9 shall be a member of the Committee on Ways
10 and Means and one shall be a member of the
11 Committee on the Budget, appointed by the
12 Speaker of the House of Representatives after
13 consultation with the minority leader of the
14 House of Representatives.

15 “(3) DEADLINE.—Members of the joint com-
16 mittee shall be appointed not later than 15 calendar
17 days after the date of the establishment of the joint
18 committee under this section. Any vacancy occurring
19 in the membership of the joint committee shall be
20 filled in the same manner in which the original ap-
21 pointment was made.

22 “(4) CO-CHAIRS.—Two of the appointed mem-
23 bers of the joint committee will serve as co-chairs,
24 one of which shall be a member of the House of
25 Representatives and one of which shall be a member

1 of the Senate. One co-chair shall be appointed by the
2 Speaker of the House of Representatives and the
3 leader in the Senate of the same political party as
4 the Speaker. The other co-chair shall be appointed
5 by the minority leader of the House of Representa-
6 tives and the leader in the Senate of the same polit-
7 ical party as the minority leader of the House. The
8 co-chairs shall be appointed not later than 14 cal-
9 endar days after the members of the joint committee
10 are appointed under this subsection.

11 “(5) VACANCIES.—Any vacancy in the joint
12 committee shall not affect its powers, but shall be
13 filled not later than 14 calendar days after the date
14 on which the vacancy occurs, in the same manner as
15 the original appointment was made. If a member of
16 the joint committee ceases to be a Member of the
17 House of Representatives or the Senate, as the case
18 may be, the member is no longer a member of the
19 joint committee and a vacancy shall exist.

20 “(f) HEARINGS AND MEETINGS.—

21 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The joint committee may,
22 for the purpose of carrying out this section, hold
23 such hearings and meetings, sit and act at such
24 times and places, require attendance of witnesses
25 and production of books, papers, and documents,

1 take such testimony, receive such evidence, and ad-
2 minister such oaths as the joint committee considers
3 advisable.

4 “(2) HEARING AND MEETING PROCEDURES AND
5 RESPONSIBILITIES OF CO-CHAIRS.—

6 “(A) HEARINGS.—The co-chairs of the
7 joint committee shall make a public announce-
8 ment of the date, place, time, and subject mat-
9 ter of any hearing to be conducted, not less
10 than 7 days in advance of such hearing, unless
11 the co-chairs determine that there is good cause
12 to begin such hearing at an earlier date.

13 “(i) EQUAL REPRESENTATION OF
14 WITNESSES.—Each co-chair shall be enti-
15 tled to select an equal number of witnesses
16 for each hearing held by the joint com-
17 mittee.

18 “(ii) WRITTEN STATEMENT.—A wit-
19 ness appearing before the joint committee
20 shall file a written statement of proposed
21 testimony at least 2 calendar days before
22 the appearance of the witness, unless the
23 requirement is waived by the co-chairs, fol-
24 lowing their determination that there is

1 good cause for failure to comply with such
2 requirement.

3 “(B) MEETINGS.—The co-chairs of the
4 joint committee shall make a public announce-
5 ment of the date, place, and time of any public
6 meeting to be held, not less than 48 hours in
7 advance of that meeting.

8 “(3) MEMBER INVOLVEMENT.—If the co-chairs
9 are unable to agree on a date, place, time, or subject
10 matter with respect to a hearing or meeting, a ma-
11 jority of the members of the joint committee may de-
12 cide (in writing) such issue and notify all such mem-
13 bers of the decision.

14 “(g) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—Upon written re-
15 quest of the co-chairs, a Federal agency, including legisla-
16 tive branch agencies, shall provide technical assistance to
17 the joint committee in order for the joint committee to
18 carry out its duties.

19 “(h) STAFFING.—To enable the joint committee to
20 carry out the purposes of this section, the joint committee
21 shall use the services of existing staff of the House of Rep-
22 resentatives and the Senate.

23 “(i) EXPENSES.—Expenses of the joint committee
24 shall be paid from—

1 “(1) the applicable accounts of the House of
2 Representatives upon vouchers signed by the co-
3 chair of the joint committee who is appointed by the
4 Speaker; and

5 “(2) the contingent fund of the Senate from the
6 appropriations account ‘Miscellaneous Items’, sub-
7 ject to the rules and regulations of the Senate.

8 “(j) TERMINATION.—The joint committee shall cease
9 to exist 30 days after legislative text is submitted under
10 subsection (d)(1).”.

11 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents
12 set forth in section 1(b) of the Congressional Budget and
13 Impoundment Control Act of 1974 (2 U.S.C. 621 note)
14 is amended by inserting after the item relating to section
15 315 the following new items:

“316. Instructions for ratio of the public debt to the estimated gross domestic
product.

“317. Joint Select Committee on Fiscal Responsibility.”.

