

PETE SESSIONS, TEXAS  
CHAIRMAN

VIRGINIA FOXX, NORTH CAROLINA  
ROB WOODALL, GEORGIA  
DANIEL WEBSTER, FLORIDA  
DAVID DREIER, CALIFORNIA

C. TOWNER FRENCH  
SUBCOMMITTEE STAFF DIRECTOR

(202) 225-9191  
www.rules.house.gov



ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS

ALCEE L. HASTINGS, FLORIDA  
RANKING MINORITY MEMBER

JARED POLIS, COLORADO  
LOUISE M. SLAUGHTER, NEW YORK

LALE MAMAUX  
MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

MINORITY OFFICE  
H-152, THE CAPITOL  
(202) 225-9091

Subcommittee on Legislative  
and Budget Process  
Committee on Rules  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-312 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515-6269

**Statement of the Honorable Alcee L. Hastings**  
**Rules Subcommittee on Legislative and Budget Process Hearing on H.R. 114, the Biennial**  
**Budgeting and Appropriations Act of 2011**  
**January 27, 2012**

Chairman Sessions, on January 24, 2012, Rules Chairman David Dreier noted during a Legislative and Budget Process Subcommittee Hearing, that I was “enthusiastic” about his bill H.R. 114, the Biennial Budgeting and Appropriations Act of 2011.

While I am certainly not opposed to Congress debating the merits of biennial budgeting, and do not believe that biennial budgeting is necessarily a bad idea, I do think that its disadvantages outweigh its advantages, and that it ultimately will not work with a budget as complex and as fraught with partisanship as ours.

Furthermore, I would beg to differ with my colleague from California’s assessment of my “so called” enthusiasm for his legislation – I am not even a co-sponsor of his bill. During the recent subcommittee hearing, he made that assertion and I would like the record to reflect his enthusiasm for his own bill is not shared by me.

Mr. Chairman, I also do not see how we can completely transform the federal budget process in this manner without first trying out a few test cases. If we are really serious about biennial budgeting, we ought to identify a few federal programs we can test this out on for a few budget cycles, before imposing it on the entire federal structure.

The problem with our annual budget and appropriations debates is not the timeline, but rather the political leadership. Smoothing out a few procedures here and there is not going to magically make our budget debates any easier.

I suspect there is a correlation between interest in biennial budgeting and the level of partisanship here in the House.

If this body really wanted to, we could agree on a budget in one day. Or even in one week. But the budget is an intensely political process and that’s not going to change if we do it every year or every other year. And even in the “off” years, we would still be required to make necessary changes, consider supplemental spending, and argue over authorizations and other revisions.

If Republicans were truly committed to working with Democrats and the President to ensure a smooth budget process, they would do so. Rather than tying our hands in convoluted budgetary procedures.

If ensuring a smooth process means that Republicans are not going to try to eliminate Medicare, or pass tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans, or threaten to default on our national debt, then by all means let's pass these reform bills.

But we all know the reality of the situation and that is, nothing is going to happen. Making the federal budget biennial will not stop the political debates, will not reduce our workload, and will ultimately result in a huge transfer of power to the Executive Branch, which by necessity will have greater leeway with the purse strings.

We ought to be about the business of finding ways in the federal budget to create jobs, to support struggling Americans, and to ensure that we are not leaving those with the least in these difficult times to fend for themselves.

In 1940, 44 states practiced biennial budgeting. This number is down to 19. It is clear that so many states have abandoned biennial budgeting over the last decade; you cannot responsibly implement a meaningful budget two to three years in advance.

In closing, I believe that this budget process gimmickry isn't going to make the Republican Party any more willing to work with Democrats and the President on these matters. And therefore, I find this process completely futile.