



## The Congressional Budget Office's Work in 2019: A Report to the Congress

The Congressional Budget Office was established under the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 to provide information that would support the Congressional budget process and help the Congress make effective budget and economic policy. CBO's work follows processes specified in that law and subsequent laws or developed over time by the agency in concert with the budget committees and the Congressional leadership. The agency's chief responsibility under the Budget Act is to help the budget committees with the matters under their jurisdiction. CBO also supports other Congressional committees—particularly the Appropriations, Ways and Means, and Finance Committees, as the Budget Act requires—and the leadership of the House and Senate.

CBO strives to present the likely consequences of proposals being considered by the Congress so that lawmakers can make informed policy choices. The agency is committed to providing information that is:

- Objective and insightful—representing the consensus and diversity of views of experts from around the country and applying the best new evidence as well as the lessons of experience;
- Timely—responding as quickly as possible to the needs of the Congress; and
- Clearly presented and explained—so that policymakers and analysts understand the basis for the agency's findings and have the opportunity to question the analysis and methods used.

In keeping with CBO's mandate to provide objective, impartial analysis, the agency makes no policy recommendations.

To fulfill its mission, CBO analyzes trends and recent developments related to the economy and the budget. It also develops 10-year and longer-term baseline projections, which incorporate the assumption that current laws generally do not change. The agency uses those baseline projections, which serve as benchmarks for gauging the effects of spending and revenue proposals, in most of its analyses. CBO produces the following materials:

- Formal cost estimates for almost all bills reported by committees of the House and Senate, including estimates of the cost of intergovernmental and private-sector mandates;
- Technical assistance while legislation is being developed and while amendments are being considered by the House and Senate;
- Scorekeeping reports and estimates for appropriation bills;
- Analytic reports, working papers, and testimony covering a broad range of budgetary and economic issues;
- Data files documenting CBO's baseline projections and providing other information underlying the analytic reports; and
- Information that clearly presents and explains CBO's analyses.

## Information CBO Provided to the Congress in 2019

In 2019, CBO provided the Congress with various types of information related to the economy and budget.

### Formal Cost Estimates and Mandate Statements

CBO completed 711 formal cost estimates in 2019. They generally included explanations of their components and of the estimating methods used. Most cost estimates also included mandate statements, which assess whether legislation contains intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and, if so, the magnitude of the mandates' effects on the private sector and on state, local, and tribal governments. CBO completed nearly all cost estimates before the legislation came to a floor vote.

Cost estimates for the following bills required especially significant effort:

- America's Transportation Infrastructure Act of 2019
- Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2019
- College Affordability Act
- Elijah E. Cummings Lower Drug Costs Now Act
- Ending Homelessness Act of 2019
- Lower Health Care Costs Act
- National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020
- Never Forget the Heroes: Permanent Authorization of the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund Act
- Prescription Drug Pricing Reduction Act of 2019
- Reauthorizing and Extending America's Community Health Act
- Rehabilitation for Multiemployer Pensions Act of 2019
- Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Service Workers Act

### Technical Assistance

To aid committees as they craft legislation, CBO provides assistance at various stages of the legislative process. To the extent practicable, CBO also provides information to Members' offices. The most common request is for a preliminary estimate of the effects of a bill or a tentative proposal on mandatory spending, but CBO's assistance may also involve answering general questions about the budget or responding to questions about previously published cost estimates. CBO fulfilled several thousand requests for such assistance in 2019. Such information was generally provided to committees or the leadership of the House or Senate for legislative proposals that they had designated as priorities. CBO provides similar information when amendments to bills are being considered.

### Scorekeeping Reports and Estimates

In 2019, CBO provided about 130 scorekeeping reports and cost estimates, including reports with account-level detail for individual appropriation bills at all stages of the legislative process, summary tables showing the status of discretionary appropriations (by appropriations subcommittee), and running totals of the budgetary effects of enacted legislation on a year-to-date basis.

### Reports, Working Papers, and Testimony About the Budget and Economy

CBO provides reports, analyses, and other information to policymakers throughout the legislative process. In 2019, as it does each year, the agency described its baseline projections in a major report about the budget and economic outlook. CBO also provided a comprehensive analysis of the long-term outlook for the federal budget—that is, the outlook over the next 30 years and an analysis of economic outcomes under various budgetary paths. In addition, CBO produced its annual analysis of the President's budgetary proposals. Besides those major reports, the agency produced many other analyses of budget and economic issues. All told, the agency produced 75 such publications; they are arrayed by category below.

#### BUDGET AND ECONOMIC PROJECTIONS IN MAJOR RECURRING REPORTS

*An Update to the Budget and Economic Outlook: 2019 to 2029* (August)

*The 2019 Long-Term Budget Outlook* (June)

*An Analysis of the President's 2020 Budget* (May)

*Updated Budget Projections: 2019 to 2029* (May)

*The Budget and Economic Outlook: 2019 to 2029*  
(January)

#### THE FEDERAL BUDGET

*Monthly Budget Review* (11 issues)

*The Accuracy of CBO's Baseline Estimates for Fiscal Year 2019* (December)

*A Summary of Selected CBO Reports on Cash and Accrual Budgeting* (October)

*An Evaluation of CBO's Past Deficit and Debt Projections*  
(September)

*Budgetary Outcomes Under Alternative Assumptions About Fiscal Policy* (August)

*Sequestration Update Report: August 2019* (August)

*CBO's Projections of Federal Receipts and Expenditures in the National Income and Product Accounts: 2019 to 2029* (July)

*Federal Mandatory Spending for Means-Tested Programs, 2009 to 2029* (June)

*Fair-Value Estimates of the Cost of Federal Credit Programs in 2020* (May)

*Answers to Questions for the Record Following a Hearing on Discretionary Appropriations Under the Budget Control Act Conducted by the Senate Committee on the Budget* (May)

*Report on the Troubled Asset Relief Program—April 2019*  
(April)

*Answers to Questions for the Record Following a Hearing on The Budget and Economic Outlook: 2019 to 2029 Conducted by the Senate Committee on the Budget* (March)

*Answers to Questions for the Record Following a Hearing Conducted by the House Committee on the Budget on The Budget and Economic Outlook: 2019 to 2029* (March)

*Expired and Expiring Authorizations of Appropriations: Fiscal Year 2019* (March)

*Legislation Enacted in the 115th Congress That Affects Mandatory Spending or Revenues* (March)

*Federal Debt and the Statutory Limit, February 2019*  
(February)

*Final Sequestration Report for Fiscal Year 2019* (February)

*Testimony on Discretionary Appropriations Under the Budget Control Act* (Testimony before the Senate Budget Committee) (February)

*Testimony on CBO's Budget and Economic Outlook: 2019 to 2029* (Testimony before the Senate Budget Committee) (January)

*Testimony on CBO's Budget and Economic Outlook: 2019 to 2029* (Testimony before the House Budget Committee) (January)

#### EMPLOYMENT AND LABOR MARKETS

*Employment of People Ages 55 to 79* (September)

*The Effect of the Employer Match and Defaults on Federal Workers' Savings Behavior in the Thrift Savings Plan* (July)

#### HEALTH CARE

*Answers to Questions for the Record Following a Hearing Conducted by the House Committee on the Budget: Key Design Components and Considerations for Establishing a Single-Payer Health Care System* (December)

*CBO's Medicare Beneficiary Cost-Sharing Model: A Technical Description* (October)

*Testimony on the Key Design Components and Considerations for Establishing a Single-Payer Health Care System* (Testimony before the House Budget Committee) (May)

*Federal Subsidies for Health Insurance Coverage for People Under Age 65: 2019 to 2029* (May)

*Key Design Components and Considerations for Establishing a Single-Payer Health Care System* (May)

*Health Insurance Coverage for People Under Age 65: Definitions and Estimates for 2015 to 2018* (April)

*Sources and Preparation of Data Used in HISIM2—CBO's Health Insurance Simulation Model* (April)

*How Do Changes in Medical Malpractice Liability Laws Affect Health Care Spending and the Federal Budget?* (April)

*Prices for and Spending on Specialty Drugs in Medicare Part D and Medicaid: An In-Depth Analysis* (March)

*Prices for and Spending on Specialty Drugs in Medicare Part D and Medicaid* (March)

*How CBO and JCT Analyzed Coverage Effects of New Rules for Association Health Plans and Short-Term Plans* (January)

#### **HOUSING, POVERTY, AND INCOME SECURITY**

*The Effects on Employment and Family Income of Increasing the Federal Minimum Wage* (July)

*The Role of the Federal Housing Administration in the Reverse-Mortgage Market* (May)

#### **INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION**

*Issues and Options for a Tax on Vehicle Miles Traveled by Commercial Trucks* (October)

*Federal Investment, 1962 to 2018* (June)

#### **MACROECONOMIC ANALYSIS**

*CBO's Economic Forecasting Record: 2019 Update* (October)

*Inflation, Inflation Expectations, and the Phillips Curve* (August)

*The Effect of Government Debt on Interest Rates* (March)

*The Effects of the Partial Shutdown Ending in January 2019* (January)

#### **NATIONAL SECURITY**

*Use of the Post-9/11 GI Bill by the National Guard and Reserves* (December)

*The Cost of Supporting Military Bases* (November)

*Alternatives for Modernizing the Navy's Sealift Force* (October)

*An Analysis of the Navy's Fiscal Year 2020 Shipbuilding Plan* (October)

*Long-Term Implications of the 2020 Future Years Defense Program* (August)

*The Cost of Replacing Today's Army Aviation Fleet* (May)

*The Personnel Requirements and Costs of New Military Space Organizations* (May)

*The Post-9/11 GI Bill: Beneficiaries, Choices, and Cost* (May)

*Costs of Submarine Maintenance at Public and Private Shipyards* (April)

*Long-Term Implications of the 2019 Future Years Defense Program* (February)

*Projected Costs of U.S. Nuclear Forces, 2019 to 2028* (January)

#### **RETIREMENT AND SOCIAL SECURITY**

*CBO's Long-Term Social Security Projections: Changes Since 2018 and Comparisons With the Social Security Trustees' Projections* (December)

*Accounting for Federal Retirement and Veterans' Benefits: Cash and Accrual Measures* (September)

*Social Security Replacement Rates and Other Benefit Measures: An In-Depth Analysis* (April)

#### **TAXES**

*The Effect of Tax-Motivated Transfer Pricing on U.S. Aggregate Trade Statistics* (May)

*Marginal Federal Tax Rates on Labor Income: 1962 to 2028* (January)

#### **OTHER TOPICS**

*Projected Changes in the Distribution of Household Income, 2016 to 2021* (December)

*Financial Regulation and the Federal Budget* (September)

*Expected Costs of Damage From Hurricane Winds and Storm-Related Flooding* (April)

#### **Other Publications**

In addition, CBO prepared other publications to increase the transparency of its work and communicate about

that work graphically. For instance, to make the composition of the federal budget easier to understand, the agency published a set of infographics. It also published interactive online products; letters answering questions from Members of Congress; slide decks exploring various analyses undertaken by the agency and explaining its analytical methods; and reports about CBO's operations. The titles of 26 such publications are listed below.

CBO also published information on its website in various other forms. For instance, 45 presentations given by CBO's staff, most of them drawn from published analyses, were posted on the website. In addition, CBO posted data files documenting its baseline projections as well as information underlying its analytic reports.

#### INFOGRAPHICS

*The Federal Budget in 2018* (June)

*Mandatory Spending in 2018* (June)

*Discretionary Spending in 2018* (June)

*Revenues in 2018* (June)

#### INTERACTIVE TOOLS

*How Increasing the Federal Minimum Wage Could Affect Employment and Family Income* (November)

*Sensitivity Tool for Financial Regulation and the Federal Budget* (September)

*The Federal Budget in 2018* (June)

*How Changing Social Security Could Affect Beneficiaries and the System's Finances* (April)

*Social Security Replacement Rates Interactive Tool* (April)

*CBO's Waterfall Model for Projecting Discretionary Spending* (January)

*Workbook for How Changes in Economic Conditions Might Affect the Federal Budget* (January)

#### LETTERS ANSWERING QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

*Additional Information About the Effects of Public Law 115-97 on Revenues* (October)

*The Impact of Various Levels of Federal Debt on GNP and GNP per Capita* (August)

*Negotiation Over Drug Prices in Medicare* (May)

#### SLIDE DECKS

*The 2019 Long-Term Budget Outlook in 23 Slides* (August)

*The Distribution of Household Income, 2016* (July)

*How Income Growth Affects Tax Revenues in CBO's Long-Term Budget Projections* (June)

*Federal Subsidies for Health Insurance Coverage for People Under Age 65: 2019 to 2029 in 12 Slides* (May)

*HISIM2—The Health Insurance Simulation Model Used in Preparing CBO's Spring 2019 Baseline Budget Projections* (April)

*The Budget Outlook for 2019 to 2029 in 16 Slides* (March)

*The Economic Outlook for 2019 to 2029 in 21 Slides* (February)

*An Overview of CBO's Life-Cycle Growth Model* (February)

#### REPORTS ON CBO'S OPERATIONS

*CBO's Work in Progress as of October 4, 2019* (October)

*CBO's Work in Progress as of July 2, 2019* (July)

*CBO's Work in Progress* (June)

*An Introduction to the Congressional Budget Office* (May)

*The Congressional Budget Office's Work in 2018: A Report to the Congress* (March)

### CBO's Internal Operations in 2019

The agency employs analysts with many types of expertise who support the Congress in collaboration with managers and support staff. At the beginning of January 2020, 258 positions at CBO were filled (see Table 1). Health care was the topic that occupied the most analysts.

Table 1.

**Allocation of CBO's Staff, January 2020**

	Number of Staff
<b>Principal Areas for Analysts</b>	
Health	44
Education, Immigration, Income Security, Labor, and Retirement	29
National Security, Veterans' Programs, and International Affairs	25
Energy, Environment, Natural Resources, and Transportation	20
Taxation	20
Macroeconomics	19
Finance and Housing	12
Budget Outlook	10
Appropriations	8
Mandates	5
Commerce, Justice, Science, and General Government	2
<b>Principal Types of Activities for Other Staff</b>	
Information Technology	15
Editing and Publishing	12
Human Resources, Financial Management, and Other Support	11
General Management	8
Clerical Support	6
Website	6
Legal Services	5
Interns	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>258</b>

Source: Congressional Budget Office.

Numbers are positions filled. Although staff are assigned to a primary type of analysis or activity in this table, they often work in many areas.

CBO continued to focus on staff development in 2019. To ensure that staff stayed current on topics that are important to CBO's work for the Congress, the agency hosted presentations by a broad range of outside researchers and other experts, and staff participated in numerous seminars to share information about their analyses, data, and estimating techniques.

CBO also maintained its emphasis on training. The agency funded participation in conferences of researchers, practitioners, and government employees on various economic and policy topics, as well as training in analytic tools and various skills. It provided ongoing training to analysts about the mechanics of budget scorekeeping and cost estimating; for example, last year analysts

participated in workshops on incorporating the effects of pending litigation into cost estimates and applying the requirements of the Federal Credit Reform Act.

CBO continued to emphasize the need to clearly communicate the results of its analyses, providing courses on writing analytic reports and training on effective presentation skills and data visualization. CBO also continued to provide staff with training in soft skills. For example, the agency provided managers with training in engaging employees and enhancing communication and productivity. Finally, CBO trained all staff about their rights as described in the newly enacted Congressional Accountability Act Reform Act.

The Congressional Budget Office prepares this report each year to help keep the Congress informed about CBO's work and operations. Wendy Edelberg coordinated the work on it during the development of CBO's budget request, with contributions from Joseph E. Evans Jr., Kathleen FitzGerald, Theresa Gullo, Keren Hendel, Deborah Kilroe, Jeffrey Kling, Leah Koestner, Benjamin Plotinsky, and Stephanie Ruiz.

Robert Sunshine reviewed the report. Rebecca Lanning was the editor, and Jorge Salazar was the graphics editor. The report is available on CBO's website ([www.cbo.gov/publication/56237](http://www.cbo.gov/publication/56237)).

CBO seeks feedback to make its work as useful as possible. Please send any comments to [communications@cbo.gov](mailto:communications@cbo.gov).



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