

The Congressional Budget Office's Mission and How the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Request Supports It

The Congressional Budget Office provides objective, nonpartisan information to support the budget process and to help the Congress make effective budget and economic policy. CBO aims for its analysis to be timely, rigorous, insightful, and clearly explained. The agency makes no policy recommendations.

Under the Budget Act, CBO works for all Congressional committees, with its chief responsibility being to help the Budget Committees with the matters under their jurisdiction. Priority under the act is also given to the House and Senate Appropriations, House Ways and Means, and Senate Finance Committees. The agency also works closely with the leadership of both chambers. Each year, the agency's roughly 270 staff fulfill thousands of requests for technical assistance, produce hundreds of cost estimates for proposed legislation, and prepare dozens of reports and other materials on a variety of topics.

CBO seeks to provide budgetary and economic information when it is most useful. One of the agency's most important objectives is to review each piece of legislation ahead of floor consideration. In 2024, CBO published estimates for nearly all of the bills ordered reported by an authorizing committee before they were considered on the floor of either the House or the Senate.

Often on fast turnarounds, CBO provides technical assistance that takes various forms and occurs throughout the legislative process. For example, CBO supports the Appropriations Committees as they craft legislation by providing real-time provision-by-provision estimates for annual appropriation bills, supplemental appropriation bills, and continuing resolutions and by explaining complicated estimating issues. CBO also reviews, for hundreds of Members, thousands of proposed amendments to legislation. In addition, the agency helps—in phone calls, emails, and meetings—Members and their staff as they consider and draft bills and when they ask questions about a complicated estimate or report.

CBO's budget request will enable the agency to provide more analysis when the Congress needs it. CBO's budget request of \$75.8 million would support 285 employees, an increase of 15—enough to satisfy the agency's responsibilities under the Budget Act. Of the new staff members in 2026, 9 would extend CBO's capabilities to provide timely analysis of changes to health care programs, border security, credit programs (like student loans), and the economy and of dynamic effects of policies that affect the economy and, in turn, the federal budget; 2 would enhance CBO's responsiveness in producing cost estimates and providing technical assistance in the legislative process; 1 would add to legal assistance; 1 would improve the readability and accessibility of CBO's materials; 1 would bolster CBO's information technology security; and 1 would boost outreach to Congressional staff and the press.

By increasing the expertise and modeling capability in areas in which CBO expects the Congress to have increased interest (for example, defense and homeland security, economic implications of fiscal policy, and long-term projections), the agency will be better able to provide the cost estimates and reports to the Congress in a timely way.