POLICY PAPER
NTUF
NATIONAL TAXPAYERS UNION FOUNDATION

Policy Paper No. 171 BillTally Report 112-3 May 28, 2013

Getting the Budget Under Control?

Legislative Spending Agendas the 112th Congress

Three events occurred fairly recently that should, in theory, favorably impact the budget's long-term outlook. The economy has gotten through the worst of the Great Recession and is expanding, albeit at a slow pace compared to past recoveries, nonetheless this means that tax revenues should be on the rise without any legislated changes. In addition, the Budget Control Act (BCA) set in place caps that would enforce some expenditure cuts in its first few years (but would then merely slow the growth in spending for the rest of the decade). Increases in tax rates and other policies were also enacted earlier this year; which may boost revenues in the short term, while having uncertain long-term effects. Despite all of this, the budget is far from being in a state that could be described as "under control." The current deficit is still near historic highs, while both the President's budget and the Congressional Budget Office's (CBO) own projections see deficits to the distant horizon.

Even the process by which the BCA's cuts are implemented was conducted with a minimum of "control". Sequestration imposes across-the-board, indiscriminate cuts that occur in subsequent appropriations, rather than going through the regular process that makes choices about the allocation of budgetary resources. Actually, sequestration was the "Plan B" of the BCA, and was designed to give lawmakers selected to a special deficit reduction committee a powerful incentive to come to a bipartisan agreement on budget reforms. Yet, the incentive for cooperation was not strong enough to overcome the large differences between the committee members when it came to fiscal issues. An analysis of each Member of Congress' spending agenda, based on the cost of bills they have either sponsored or cosponsored, shows a growing chasm between those who would continue to expand the government and those who would shrink it.

This report summarizes data from NTUF's BillTally accounting software, which studies the cost or savings of all legislation introduced in the 112th Congress that affects federal spending by at least $1 million. Agenda totals for individual lawmakers were developed by cross-indexing their sponsorship and cosponsorship records with cost estimates for 1,076 House bills and 712 Senate bills under BillTally accounting rules that prevent the double-counting of overlapping proposals.[1] Each Congressional office was given the opportunity to review all sponsorship and cost data in this report confidentially prior to publication. Appendix A lists all Members alphabetically, Appendix B lists Members by state delegation, and Appendix C provides a thorough explanation of the BillTally methodology.[2]

I. Key Findings

- The 112th Congress saw a sharp rise in the number of bills to reduce federal spending, with 221 introduced in the House and 127 in the Senate. This is the highest number of spending-cut bills NTUF has recorded since the 105th Congress (1997-1998) when there were 265.

- Legislation to boost spending, while still more numerous, is being introduced at a much slower pace than in the previous Congress. Representatives authored 855 increase bills – four bills for each savings bill. Senators offered 584 bills that would increase budgetary outlays, nearly five for each savings bill. This is the first time in over a decade that the ratio of increases to cuts was not in double digits.

- Excluding overlapping legislation, if each of the House increase bills became law, annual spending would rise by $2.2 trillion. The passage of all the House savings bills would subtract $861.1 billion, for a net rise of $1.3 trillion. This amounts to additional federal outlays of $11,402 per household. The Senate's spending bills would add $1.4 trillion to federal outlays, saving $1.0 trillion – for a net cost of $344 billion ($2,930 per household).

- For the first time, NTUF calculated the net cost of all non-overlapping legislation introduced in the entire Congress. NTUF identified 1,141 unique measures to increase spending between the House and Senate. If all of these proposals were enacted into law, spending would climb by nearly $2.5 trillion. Out of all of the savings bills offered by each Chamber, 198 were non-overlapping. In total, these would cut outlays by $1.2 trillion, leaving a net budgetary cost of $1.3 trillion. Therefore, enactment of this legislation all at once would boost the budget by nearly one-third.

- If all the bills supported by the average House Republican were enacted into law, spending would have fallen by $169.1 billion (the net of $177.4 billion in savings and $8.3 billion in new outlays). This is greater than twice the typical House GOP Member's proposed net savings total from the 111th Congress. House Democrats proposed $569.6 billion in new spending. Two percent of this would be offset by $13.4 billion in savings, for a net spending agenda of $556.3 billion. This is higher than in the 111th Congress.

- Compared to their House colleagues, Democrats in the Senate would not raise spending as much. On average, they advocated $6.0 billion in budget reductions and $44.7 billion in increases, for a net agenda of $38.7 billion. For the previous five Congresses, the typical Senate Democrat has sponsored spending agendas of over $100 billion.

- The average Senate Republican sought $6.5 billion in new spending increases compared to $279.4 billion in cuts, for a net cutting agenda of $273.0 billion. The previous largest net agenda to cut spending was $23.1 billion in the 103rd Congress (1993-1994).

- The number of "net cutters" – Members whose net agendas would reduce the budget – soared in the House to 234 last year, including one Democrat and all but seven Republicans. In the Senate, six Democrats and every single Republican proposed net agendas to shrink the budget.

- With the exception of the freshman Democratic class in the Senate, the average newcomer to Congress called for less spending and more savings than their returning colleagues.

- Among the caucuses self-identified as "fiscally conservative", the typical Member of the Tea Party Caucus had the largest net cutting agenda ($233.8 billion) followed by the Republican Study Committee ($209.4 billion). The average House Member of the Republican Main Street Partnership, a related caucus that also espouses "fiscal discipline," offered $75.8 billion in cuts. Meanwhile, Members of the Democratic Blue Dog Coalition supported budget increases of $86.1 billion: an agenda just one-sixth the size of the average Democrat's.

II. Analysis of Findings

A. Representatives' "Wish Lists"

NTUF examines nearly every bill introduced in each Session of Congress to determine its effect on federal outlays.[3] After gathering this data, the cost estimates are matched up with the bills sponsored by each Member of Congress. A Senator's or Representative's record of authored and sponsored bills can be viewed as his or her legislative "wish list," free from the pressure of party leaders that normally comes with the voting process. By tabulating the cost and/or savings of each Member's agenda, taxpayers can gain a better understanding of the policy interests as well as the guiding budgetary philosophies of their elected representatives. Compared to recent years, Members in the current Congress have scaled back their calls for new spending and are also seeking more ways to cut the budget.

Starting with the 111th Congress, Members began introducing an increasing number of bills that would reduce federal spending. The 112th Congress – sometimes dubbed the "Tea Party Congress" because of the electoral wave that swept in a number of candidates running on a limited-government platform – not only built on that trend, but also started to significantly scale back the volume of spending proposals. After exceeding 1,500 for the past two Congresses, Representatives introduced just 855 increase bills. For the first time since the 106th Congress (1999-2000), the number of spending-hike bills dropped below 1,000.

Table 1. Bill Introduction Rates and Number of Scored Bills in the Past Eleven Congresses

Congress	Scored Bills	Spending Increase Bills	Spending Decrease Bills	Ratio of Increase Bills to Decrease Bills
House				
102nd	1,304	1,087	217	5.00
103rd	1,399	941	458	2.05
104th	796	496	300	1.65
105th	855	657	198	3.32
106th	986	915	71	12.89

107th	1,186	1,138	48	23.71
108th	1,406	1,343	63	21.32
109th	1,404	1,332	72	18.50
110th	1,634	1,565	69	22.68
111th	1,654	1,532	122	12.56
112th	1,076	855	221	3.87
Senate				
102nd	756	641	115	5.57
103rd	729	548	181	3.03
104th	410	278	132	2.10
105th	548	481	67	7.18
106th	790	739	51	14.49
107th	851	828	23	36.00
108th	1,075	1,040	35	29.71
109th	1,029	985	44	22.39
110th	1,126	1,090	36	30.28
111th	1,002	948	54	17.56
112th	712	584	127	4.60

While this may be an encouraging sign for taxpayers hoping for "budget control," spending increase proposals still outnumber reductions, although not by as much as in recent Congresses. A total of 221 savings bills were introduced in the 112th Congress: the most since the 104th Congress that marked the "Republican Revolution," an earlier "wave election" of candidates vowing to restrain spending. For each of the savings bills, Members proposed nearly four increases, down significantly from previous years which saw the ratio rise as high as 24 to 1 in the 107th Congress. The lowest level was seen in the 104th Congress, where the proportion was just 2 to 1.

The data from the Upper Chamber of Congress tells a similar story: Senators offered a lot more bills to cut spending and many fewer budget-increasing bills. After 10 years in which Senators introduced an average of more than 1,000 spending hike bills per Congress, only 584 were authored in the 112th Congress. Meanwhile, the number of savings bills more than doubled to a level not seen since the 104th Congress. For each savings bill offered, Senators introduced over four increase bills, a ratio that has dropped from over 30:1 and 17:1 in the previous two respective Congresses.

B. Cost of All the Bills Introduced in Congress

As mentioned, 855 bills in the House would, on net, increase spending, and 221 would lead to a net reduction in outlays. Among the total number of bills introduced, several were duplicated proposals. For example, 13 bills included language that would save $3 million annually by repealing the automatic cost-of-living adjustments for Congressional salaries. Overlapping measures are identified and marked in the BillTally system in order to prevent double-counting. If a Representative or Senator is a sponsor of separate legislation that would enact duplicate measures, only the measure with the largest net increase or cut is counted toward the calculation of that Member's net spending agenda.

In some cases, bills that would increase spending significantly for a short-term program (such as an extension of unemployment benefits) included offsetting cuts that would reduce spending by a comparable amount, but over a much longer period of time. For example, H.R. 3765, the Temporary Payroll Tax Cut Continuation Act of 2011, became law December 23, 2011. The bill enacted a temporary extension of Unemployment Compensation for an additional six months at a cost of $8.4 billion in Fiscal Year 2012. It also included a so-called "Doc Fix" that delayed previously scheduled cuts to Medicare physician payments. This provision increased spending by $3.4 billion in FY 2012, with some relatively smaller outlay effects over the next four years. The law offset these costs by increasing fees and premiums on mortgages backed by the Federal Housing Finance Agency that would add to offsetting receipts (scored as negative spending by the CBO) by $16.7 billion over five years. So while the bill does eventually offset the new spending it contains, it should be noted that Unemployment Compensation has been extended or augmented eleven times since 2008, and the "Doc fix" has been extended regularly since 1997.[4]

As Congress regularly passes laws that have a significant upfront cost, but "pays for" those laws with long-term cuts – as in the above example – the net effect is to drive spending upward. This is not effective budgeting on the part of our elected officials. The increases and decreases in these bills thereby are entered separately in the BillTally system to track the real annualized budgetary impact of legislation (and if some of these offsets were also introduced as stand-alone legislation, they would be marked accordingly as overlapping).

Table 2. Cost of All the Non-Overlapping Bills in Congress (Dollar Figures in Trillions)

	# of Non-Overlapping Measures	Cost
House		
Increases	806	$2.201
Decreases	153	($0.861)
Total	**959**	**$1.340**
Senate		
Increases	568	$1.358
Decreases	98	($1.014)
Total	**666**	**$0.344**
Both Chambers of Congress		
Increases	1,141	$2.495
Decreases	198	($1.213)
Total	**1339**	**$1.282**

NTUF identified 897 spending increase proposals among all of the House bills that were introduced. Of these, 806 were non-overlapping. If all of these measures were enacted into law, spending would jump by $2.20 trillion. The bill per household for this new spending would be $18,728.48.[5]

As noted, several duplicate or overlapping savings proposals were also introduced either as stand-alone legislation, or included in a larger package of spending reduction proposals or as partial offsets in legislation that would, on an annualized basis, increase spending. NTUF identified 283 House savings proposals, of which 153 were non-overlapping. The fiscal impact of these bills would see spending cut by $861.1 billion. On net, the non-overlapping proposals introduced in the House would raise spending by $1.34 trillion, or $11,402.35 per household.

A close examination of all of the Senate bills with cost estimates identified 620 spending increase proposals, of which 568 were unique and non-overlapping, and 166 budget-cutting proposals, of which 98 were non-overlapping. The effect of the increase proposals would drive up the federal budget by $1.36 trillion. Although there were fewer individual cuts as compared with the House, they would achieve a larger reduction of the budget. The 98 non-overlapping savings proposals would reduce spending by $1.01 trillion. On net, if all bills in the Senate were enacted into law, spending would increase by $344.3 billion, or $2,929.61 per household.

For the first time, NTUF analyzed the non-overlapping legislation in each Chamber to estimate the total cost of all the unique proposals in all of Congress. Many sets of companion legislation are introduced separately in each Chamber. By comparing the non-overlapping proposals across the House and Senate, NTUF identified 1,141 measures to increase spending. If all of these proposals were enacted into law, spending would climb by nearly $2.5 trillion. Out of all of the savings bills offered by each Chamber, 198 were unique and non-overlapping. In total, these would cut outlays by $1.2 trillion, leaving a net budgetary cost of $1.3 trillion if Congress passed every one of the bills it drafted.

C. Legislative Agenda Items in the House

The most popular issue area for spending legislation was health care – 116 bills were drafted to provide health services, conduct research and public awareness campaigns, or to allow for the training and/or hiring of health care workers. Proposals in this area also came with the highest average annual cost ($18.2 billion), a figure pushed up by two related measures to implement a universal, single-payer health care system: H.R. 676 (78 sponsors and cosponsors) the Expanded & Improved Medicare For All Act, and H.R. 1200, the American Health Security Act of 2011 (12 sponsors and cosponsors). An official cost estimate is not available for H.R. 676, but its supporters are calling for net annual funding of $1.16 trillion.[6] The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) completed a cost estimate for the American Health Security Act in 1993. In the absence of a newer cost estimate, adjusting CBO's figures for inflation, the bill would cost $796.7 billion annually.[7] Without these two overarching packages, the average spending per bill in this category would be $1.3 billion.

The second most popular policy topic addressed in legislation was education. Of all of the spending increase measures in the House, 111 opted to increase spending for schools and facilities, student loans and grants, curriculum enhancement, and other education-related endeavors. These proposals had an average price tag of $1.4 billion. The higher-costing bills in this category called for increased funding for "IDEA," the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (H.R. 864: $23 billion, annually, and also included in H.R. 2935 for $10 billion annually), teacher stabilization (three different bills ranging from $6 billion to $20 billion annually), and for school repair and modernization (several bills varying from $6 billion to $10 billion per year).

The third most popular issue area involved in bill-drafting was commerce, job creation, and economic stimulus.[a] For example, bills such as H.R. 870 and H.R. 4277, the Humphrey-Hawkins 21st Century Full Employment and Training Act of 2012, would provide over $100 billion in annual grants to the states for job creation and stabilization. Smaller bills such as H.R. 3715 would spend an estimated $1 million per year to improve online job training. Ninety-seven bills to increase commerce and economic stimulus were introduced in the 112th Congress, with an average cost of $4.5 billion, annually.

On the budget-cutting side, NTUF identified 32 bills that would find savings in health-care related spending, including 13 bills that eliminate the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) in its entirety (for an annual savings of $63.9 billion) and 15 bills to repeal portions of the health care system overhaul law, such as eliminating the Independent Payment Advisory Board ($15 million) or the Prevention and Public Health Fund ($135 million). In addition there were six bills to enact either across-the-board rescissions (for an average savings of $27.7 billion annually) and 12 bills to establish spending caps (for an average of $102.4 billion per year). Also, as mentioned above, there were 13 different bills to cancel the cost of living adjustment that annually boosts the salaries of Representatives and Senators each year (a $3 million savings).

D. Legislative Agenda Items in the Senate

The Senate's trending issues closely matched the House's, except that education emerged as a hotter topic. Seventy-three Senate measures would impact education programs at an average of $1.3 billion per year apiece, led by several bills that were companions of House legislation to increase spending for IDEA programs, teacher stabilization, and school modernization.

Public health policy was the second-most covered item on the Senate's legislative agenda. Sixty-nine bills were introduced to raise spending on Medicare, Medicaid, health services, or the employment and training of health care workers. On average these would cost $13.2 billion, a number pushed up by the $796.7 billion price tag to enact a national health care system (S. 915, with one sponsor and zero cosponsors). The next most-costly proposal would have prohibited pharmaceutical producers from having any exclusive rights to the drugs they create. Instead, a new tax would finance a "Medical Innovation Prize Fund" to reward firms that research and produce new

[a] There were also 41 bills with an average cost of $10.0 billion that would increase spending for infrastructure and transportation programs; many of these were also intended to promote job creation.

drugs or biological products (such as vaccines). Based on figures from the text of the bill and budget data, this could cost upwards of $100 billion per year.

The third most-drafted policy area for spending increases included commerce and economic stimulus proposals. Sixty such bills were authored, with an average price tag of $3.5 billion. The non-overlapping measures in this category would increase spending by an annualized total of $194.3 billion.

The Senate's cut proposals were also similar to the House's, with numerous plans to repeal all or parts of PPACA; as well as nine spending caps (the largest of which would save $177 billion), three across-the-board rescissions, and S. 162, which included specific discretionary cuts to reduce the budget by over $411 billion. As in the House, pre-empting Congressional pay increases proved popular, with five such measures.

Two additional bills among the largest savers would each eliminate the current Tax Code and replace it with either a flat tax (S. 820) or a FairTax (S. 13). Both would roll back spending in the Tax Code in the form of refundable credits. These are credits a tax filer can receive above and beyond any income tax liability. When these bills were introduced in 2011, the federal budget included $77.2 billion in outlays from refundable credits. In addition, the FairTax proposal would eventually eliminate the Internal Revenue Service, replacing it with a smaller federal agency to administer the plan's tax rebates.

E. House Members' Spending Agendas

Based on the sponsorship patterns of legislation in the House, it appears that the two major parties are drifting further apart when it comes to the federal budget. One side has increasingly called for more new spending, while the other side has effectively doubled-down on the amount of cuts it would like to see made to federal outlays.

The net spending agendas of the typical Member of either party had reached their respective high-water marks just a few Congresses back: in the 109th for the average Democrat (at $765.8 billion), and in the 108th for the average Republican (at $35 billion). Since then, the net agendas had been trending lower across both parties (except for a $5.3 billion upward shift for Republicans in the 110th Congress). By the 111th Congress, the typical Republican was a net spending cutter and the Democrats' average agenda was $227 billion lower.

In the new Congress, the Democrats reversed course.

Table 3. Average House Sponsorship of Legislation in the Past Eleven Congresses (by Party, in Millions)

Congress	Proposed Increases	Proposed Cuts	Net Agenda	% of Increases Offset

Democrats				
102nd	$123,982	($5,786)	$118,195	4.7%
103rd	$293,367	($23,393)	$269,973	8.0%
104th	$175,208	($10,123)	$165,085	5.8%
105th	$115,024	($2,871)	$112,152	2.5%
106th	$60,917	($1,174)	$59,743	1.9%
107th	$418,428	($864)	$417,564	0.2%
108th	$521,158	($171)	$520,987	0.0%
109th	$766,366	($614)	$765,752	0.1%
110th	$626,091	($1,388)	$624,702	4.7%
111th	$549,660	($10,819)	$538,841	2.0%
112th	$569,619	($13,367)	$556,252	2.4%
Republicans				
102nd	$19,917	($9,602)	$10,314	48.2%
103rd	$39,523	($62,394)	($22,871)	157.9%
104th	$8,162	($26,638)	($18,476)	326.4%
105th	$14,297	($16,366)	($2,069)	114.5%
106th	$24,299	($16,121)	$8,178	66.3%
107th	$46,175	($13,887)	$32,287	30.1%
108th	$39,245	($4,245)	$35,000	10.8%
109th	$27,610	($6,058)	$21,551	21.9%
110th	$34,321	($7,612)	$26,709	22.2%
111th	$36,166	($114,248)	($78,082)	315.9%
112th	$8,306	($177,419)	($169,113)	2,135.9%
Note: Totals may not add due to rounding. Averages exclude the Speaker of the House and Members who are Independents.				

The net spending agenda of the typical Democrat went upwards to $556.3 billion in the 112th Congress. Compared to Fiscal Year 2012, this would represent a 16 percent increase in budgetary outlays. The "nets" ranged from a savings agenda of $17.0 billion to $1.77 trillion in new spending. In addition to support for more funding toward economic stimulus, job stabilization, and transportation infrastructure, the average Democrat's agenda was fueled by calls to expand spending on health care – especially the bills supported by 78 distinct Representatives to establish a single-payer national health care system. Excluding those two bills, however, the average agenda of the typical Democrat would have been notably lower: $112.3 billion.

Meanwhile, the average Republican's net agenda more than doubled its calls for cuts, from $78 billion to $169.1 billion. This would represent a 5 percent cut in FY 2012's total outlays. The GOP individual net agenda amounts ranged from an increase of $15.7 billion to a cut of $608.9 billion. On average, the Republicans called for $8.3 billion in increases (partly for the costs of proposals that would be used to replace PPACA after it is repealed as well as proposals to increase payments for veterans' benefits). These were more than offset by proposals that would cap federal spending.

F. Senators' Spending Agendas

Table 4. Average Senate Sponsorship of Legislation in the Past Eleven Congresses (by Party, in Millions)

Congress	Proposed Increases	Proposed Cuts	Net Agenda	% of Increases Offset
Democrats				
102nd	$77,149	($5,449)	$71,700	7.1%
103rd	$212,869	($16,375)	$196,494	7.7%
104th	$6,399	($5,227)	$1,171	81.7%
105th	$39,301	($1,730)	$37,571	4.4%
106th	$53,933	($863)	$53,069	1.6%
107th	$151,158	($270)	$150,887	0.2%
108th	$158,052	($465)	$157,588	0.3%
109th	$117,869	($295)	$117,574	0.3%
110th	$194,357	($1,014)	$193,343	0.5%
111th	$199,015	($3,448)	$195,567	1.7%
112th	$44,709	($5,984)	$38,725	13.4%
Republicans				
102nd	$26,329	($9,847)	$16,482	37.4%
103rd	$45,343	($68,452)	($23,110)	151.0%
104th	$8,233	($23,826)	($15,592)	289.4%
105th	$17,196	($8,204)	$8,992	47.7%
106th	$24,508	($10,234)	$14,274	41.8%
107th	$34,371	($179)	$34,192	0.5%
108th	$36,175	($2,509)	$33,667	6.9%
109th	$27,028	($5,977)	$21,051	22.1%
110th	$124,907	($6,665)	$118,242	5.3%
111th	$76,362	($50,959)	$25,402	66.7%
112th	$6,500	($279,425)	($272,925)	4,298.5%
Note: Totals may not add due to rounding. Averages exclude Members who are Independents.				

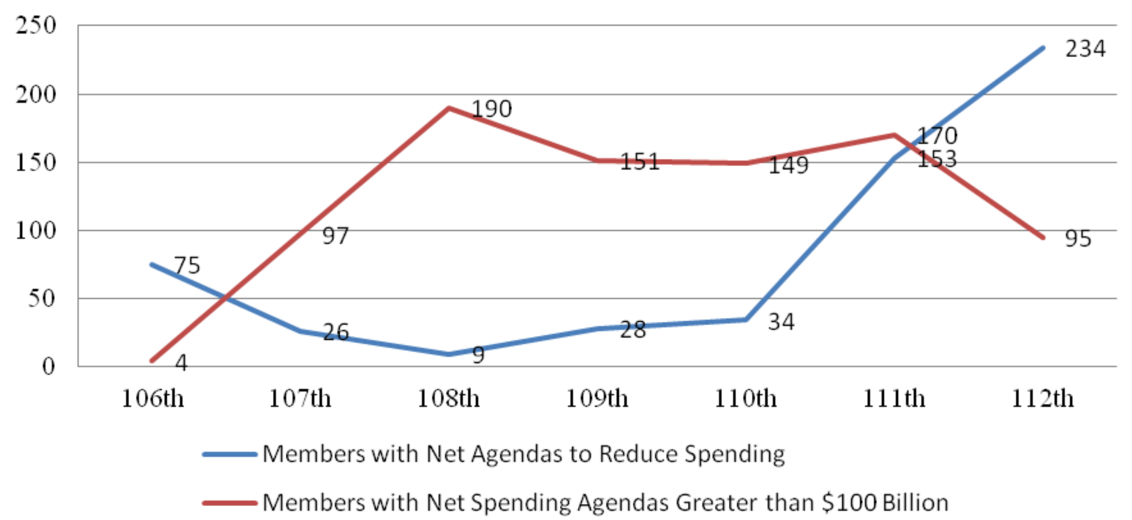
Compared to the previous Congress, a given Senator of either party advocated a significantly lower level of new spending. In the 111th Congress, the agenda of the average Democrat was $195.6 billion, just below the top level that was reached back in the 103rd Congress (1993-1994). However, for five straight Congresses the amount never dropped below $100 billion. Among individuals, the totals ranged from $271.5 billion of increases to $12.6 billion in reductions.

On the other side of the aisle, for the first time since the 104th Congress, the average Republican was once again a net cutter. Over the intervening years, the Republicans' net agenda ranged from a low of $9.0 billion (105th Congress) up to $118.2 billion in the 110th Congress. An infusion of "Tea Party" freshmen supported a mix of across-the-board budget caps and specific program cuts that tamped down on spending. Every single Republican Senator was a net cutter, with agendas ranging from -$12.0 billion to -$650.4 billion.

G. The Outliers

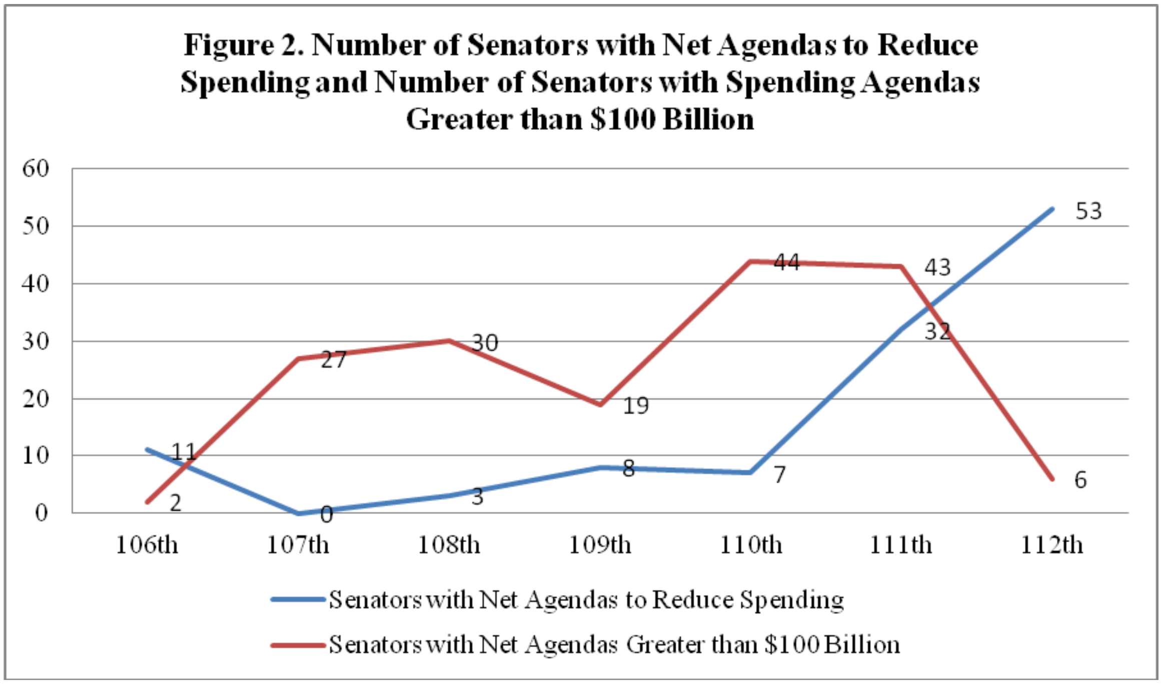
Given the shift toward putting forth and cosponsoring more spending reductions, it is not surprising to see a noteworthy leap in the number of net cutters in the halls of Congress (Members whose net agendas would reduce the budget) and those calling for the largest spending increases. The number of net cutters, whose ranks had dwindled to nine in the House during the 108th Congress, dramatically swelled to 153 in the 111th Congress, and even further to 234 last year, including 1 Democrat. This represents over 40 percent of the whole House and 97 percent of the Republican caucus (all but seven Members).

Figure 1. Number of Representatives with Net Agendas to Reduce Spending and Number of Members with Spending Agendas Greater than $100 Billion



There was a similar turnaround in the Senate. As recently as the 107th Congress, there was not a single Senator who called for net savings. Now, more than half of the body would shrink the budget. Six Democrats joined the 47 Republicans in pursuing net reductions.

More surprising was the large contraction in the ranks of Congressmen and Senators with large-scale spending agendas. For the first time since the 106th Congress, there were more net cutters than there were Representatives and Senators calling for significant annual spending hikes in excess of $100 billion.



H. Freshmen vs. Returning Members

The data in Table 5 (below) shows that in general, the newcomers to the House backed fewer increases and more cuts than their returning colleagues. On the House side, the average returning Democrat's net agenda ($560.4 billion) was nearly $64 billion larger than a freshman's ($496.2 billion). An incoming Republican Representative's average agenda ($191.0 billion) would have reduced the budget by $33.7 billion more than the returning Republican's ($157.2 billion).

Table 5. Average Net Spending Agendas of Freshmen and Returning Members in the 112th Congress (by Party, in Millions)

	Number of Increase Bills	Proposed Increases	Number of Savings Bills	Proposed Cuts	Net Agenda
House					
All Freshmen	23	$62,903	18	($175,059)	($112,156)
All Returning	48	$317,951	10	($83,104)	$234,847

Freshman Democrats	47	$505,506	3	($9,256)	$496,249
Returning Democrats	70	$573,390	4	($13,609)	$559,781
Freshman Republicans	20	$5,625	20	($196,516)	($190,890)
Returning Republicans	21	$9,777	18	($166,947)	($157,170)
Senate					
All Freshmen	27	$15,933	25	($264,897)	($248,965)
All Returning	45	$40,782	15	($109,676)	($68,894)
Freshman Democrats	70	$69,676	6	($4,663)	$65,013
Returning Democrats	60	$43,149	7	($6,067)	$37,082
Freshman Republicans	17	$3,530	29	($324,951)	($321,421)
Returning Republicans	23	$7,636	27	($262,018)	($254,382)
Notes: Totals may not add due to rounding.					

This difference was most notable among the Senate Republicans, where the newcomers sought $67 billion more in cuts, on average, than returning Republicans. These freshmen also advocated the smallest level of budgetary increases ($3.5 billion), which was more than outmatched by their proposed decreases. Senate Democrats were the one exception, but this could be attributable to the small sample. Among the three Democratic freshmen, two of the Members had net agendas of $27 billion and $5 billion, each below the agenda level of the average Democrat, while the third called for new spending of $163 billion – among the largest agendas in the Senate.

I. Fiscally-Related Member Caucuses

Once elected to Congress, a Representative has the option to join any of several Member caucuses that organize around a particular issue area and/or political philosophy. In these caucuses, Members can share ideas and coordinate strategies to promote or oppose particular legislation. Such caucuses are more prevalent in the House. Two long-standing caucuses, the Republican Study Committee (RSC) and the Democratic Blue Dog Coalition (BDC), both espouse fiscal discipline for their respective parties. The RSC states that it is dedicated to "a limited and Constitutional role for the federal government."[8] On its website, the BDC states that its Members are "dedicated to the financial stability … of the United States" and have a "commitment to fiscal responsibility."[9] A related third caucus, the Republican Main Street Partnership (RMSP),[10] was founded to "promote thoughtful leadership in the Republican Party and to develop and advocate for pragmatic common sense solutions to the challenges our country faces."[11] The Partnership's mission page states that its members are "main stream fiscally conservative elected officials."[12] These groups have been joined by the newer Tea Party Caucus that "stands for the fundamental principles of fiscal responsibility, limited government and strict adherence to the Constitution."[13]

Although these caucuses seem to share at least some fiscal objectives, there is a great deal of variance in the net agendas produced by the average Member of each of these organizations. Tea

Party Caucus Members produced the largest net cutting agenda at $233.8 billion. All but five of the Republicans in this Caucus were also in the larger RSC, whose membership sought average budgetary reductions of $209.4 billion. RMSP Members, on average, sponsored legislation that would cut spending by $75.8 billion.[b]

Table 6. Average Spending Agendas by Caucuses and Member Organizations in the 112th Congress (in Millions)

Caucus	Number of Increase Bills	Proposed Increases	Number of Savings Bills	Proposed Cuts	Net Agenda
Republican Study Committee	19	$7,672	22	($217,094)	($209,422)
Republican Main Street Partnership	25	$10,706	12	($86,469)	($75,763)
Tea Party Caucus	20	$8,451	25	($242,274)	($233,823)
Average Republican	21	$8,306	18	($177,419)	($169,113)
Blue Dog Democrats	46	$91,302	5	($5,226)	$86,076
All Other Democrats	72	$635,593	4	($14,490)	$621,103
Average Democrat	69	$569,619	4	($13,367)	$556,252
Progressive Caucus	91	$1,054,184	5	($25,507)	$1,028,677
Note: Totals may not add due to rounding. RMSP data only includes its Members in the House.					

The fourth "fiscal responsibility" caucus listed in Table 6 charted a different path for the federal budget. The typical Member of the Blue Dog Coalition supported legislation that would boost outlays by $86.1 billion, much larger than the other fiscally-focused caucuses, but relatively small compared to the average Democrat (whose net spending agenda was six times greater). Blue Dogs may be an endangered species: they took a beating going into the 112th Congress, losing 26 of their 54 Members, and now comprise a smaller part of the Democratic Caucus in the 113th Congress, with 15 Members currently.

The Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC), which claims to be the largest subgroup within the general Democratic Caucus, included 76 Members in the 112th Congress. The Progressive Caucus makes no claim to "fiscal discipline" but instead favors "economic justice."[14] The average Member of the CPC sponsored 91 bills to increase spending and five bills to cut spending, for a net agenda of nearly $1.03 trillion.

III. Conclusion

With the one notable exception – those Members pursuing a high-cost nationalized, universal, single-payer health care system – we have found that compared to previous years, many Representatives and Senators have scaled back their spending agendas. This rebound is an

[b] Seventeen Representatives were publicly listed as Members in both the RSC and the RMSP.

encouraging sign for taxpayers seeking budgetary restraint, but as the data shows, the balance of Congress's workload is still tilted in favor of consideration of spending increases. Moreover, there is a growing divide between those seeking net budgetary reductions and those supporting a mix of legislation which, if enacted, would result in higher spending that would have to be financed through higher taxes or more federal debt.

The passage of the Budget Control Act has had only a small impact on the long-term budget picture. And the President's FY 2014 budget project, which includes even more tax hikes and foresees tax receipts growing to 20 percent of GDP by 2023, still shows a cumulative $5 trillion imbalance over the next decade. To those who fear the occurrence of a Greek-style fiscal blowout in the U.S., more must be done to control the budget on the spending side while avoiding tax hikes that could damage the economic recovery.

Currently, nearly 60 percent of federal expenditures are classified as entitlement spending, including programs such as Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and the health-insurance subsidies contained in the new health care law. CBO projects that, under current policies, this portion of outlays will increase to 70 percent by 2023.[15] Without a bipartisan agreement to enact some real restraint over this fast-growing share of the government, tax burdens will likely skyrocket. For many taxpayers, "budget control" is more than just a phrase to describe a piece of legislation – it is an imperative for the country's future.

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The data and analysis in this report were compiled with the assistance of Research and Outreach Manager Dan Barrett and Policy Analyst Michael Tasselmyer.

End Notes

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[1] Cosponsor information obtained from www.govtrack.us.
[2] Members who resigned, died, or served temporarily were excluded from the study.
[3] Regular appropriations bills are excluded. For more information, see the Methodology in Appendix C.
[4] Whittaker, Julie M. and Katelin P. Isaacs, "Extending Unemployment Compensation Benefits During Recessions," Congressional Research Service, May 2, 2013, RL34340. http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL34340.pdf.
[5] "Households, Families, Subfamilies, and Married Couples: 1980 to 2010," *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2012 (131st edition),* U.S. Census Bureau (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2011), Table 59.
[6] *HR 676: 35 Questions and Answers*, Single Payer Now, February 9, 2009. http://www.singlepayernow.net/wp-content/uploads/HR676-35Questions.pdf.
The cost estimate was updated with 2012 projections of national health care expenditures. http://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/NationalHealthExpendData/downloads//proj2010.pdf.
[7] HR 1200, American Health Security Act of 1993, Congressional Budget Office, December 16, 1993. http://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/cbofiles/ftpdocs/79xx/doc7945/93doc08b.pdf
[8] http://rsc.jordan.house.gov/AboutRSC/.
[9] http://ross.house.gov/BlueDog/About.htm.
[10] The Republican Main Street Partnership includes Members from both Chambers, as well as officials at the state level. These figures are based only on RMSP Members serving in the House.

[11] http://www.republicanmainstreet.org/about-us/.
[12] http://www.republicanmainstreet.org/mission-2/.
[13] http://teapartycaucus-bachmann.house.gov/about-me.
[14] http://cpc.grijalva.house.gov/index.cfm?SectionID=2&ParentID=0&SectionTypeID=2&SectionTree=2.
[15] Congressional Budget Office, "Updated Budget Projections: Fiscal Years 2013 to 2023," May 2013. http://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/cbofiles/attachments/44172-Baseline2.pdf.