

changed on January 4, 1977 (H. Res. 5, 95th Cong., pp. 53–70) to require that conference meetings be open except where the House by record vote determines that a meeting may be closed, to allow a point of order against a conference report where the conferees have violated this clause, and to provide for subsequent disposition of the matter reported from conference should such a point of order be sustained, and was further amended in the 96th Congress (H. Res. 5, Jan. 5, 1979, pp. 7–16) to provide that if the conference report is considered read under this rule, a point of order under this clause must be made immediately upon consideration of the conference report. Before the House recodified its rules in the 106th Congress, this provision was found in former clause 6 of rule XXVIII (H. Res. 5, Jan. 6, 1999, p. —).

At any time after a bill has been sent to conference and conferees have been appointed by the Speaker, a motion pursuant to this clause authorizing a conference committee to close its meetings to the public is privileged for consideration in the House, is debatable for one hour within the control of the Member offering the motion, and must be voted on by a record vote (Speaker O’Neill, May 23, 1977, pp. 15880–84; Apr. 13, 1978, p. 10128). While the Chair does not normally look behind signatures of conferees to determine the propriety of conference procedure, if proposed conferees have signed a conference report before they have been formally appointed in both Houses and do not meet formally in open session after such appointment, the conference report is subject to a point of order under this clause resulting in an automatic request for a further conference (Dec. 20, 1982, p. 32896). Although a motion to close a conference committee meeting “to the public” would, under the precedents (see V, 6254, fn.), exclude Members who were not conferees, a motion may be offered as privileged under this clause to authorize a conference committee to close its meetings to the public, except to Members of Congress (Speaker O’Neill, May 23, 1977, pp. 15880–84).

Clause 11(k) of rule X provides that this provision does not apply to conference committee meetings respecting legislation (or any part thereof) reported by the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

RULE XXIII

STATUTORY LIMIT ON PUBLIC DEBT

1. Upon adoption by Congress of a concurrent resolution on the budget under section 301 or 304 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 that sets forth, as the appropriate level of the public debt for the period to which the concurrent resolution relates, an

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amount that is different from the amount of the statutory limit on the public debt that otherwise would be in effect for that period, the Clerk shall prepare an engrossment of a joint resolution increasing or decreasing, as the case may be, the statutory limit on the public debt in the form prescribed in clause 2. Upon engrossment of the joint resolution, the vote by which the concurrent resolution on the budget was finally agreed to in the House shall also be considered as a vote on passage of the joint resolution in the House, and the joint resolution shall be considered as passed by the House and duly certified and examined. The engrossed copy shall be signed by the Clerk and transmitted to the Senate for further legislative action.

2. The matter after the resolving clause in a joint resolution described in clause 1 shall be as follows: "That subsection (b) of section 3101 of title 31, United States Code, is amended by striking out the dollar limitation contained in such subsection and inserting in lieu thereof '\$____'." with the blank being filled with a dollar limitation equal to the appropriate level of the public debt set forth pursuant to section 301(a)(5) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 in the relevant concurrent resolution described in clause 1. If an adopted concurrent resolution under clause 1 sets forth different appropriate levels of the public debt for separate periods, only one engrossed joint resolution shall be prepared under clause 1; and the blank referred

to in the preceding sentence shall be filled with the limitation that is to apply for each period.

3. (a) The report of the Committee on the Budget on a concurrent resolution described in clause 1 and the joint explanatory statement of the managers on a conference report to accompany such a concurrent resolution each shall contain a clear statement of the effect the eventual enactment of a joint resolution engrossed under this rule would have on the statutory limit on the public debt.

(b) It shall not be in order for the House to consider a concurrent resolution described in clause 1, or a conference report thereon, unless the report of the Committee on the Budget or the joint explanatory statement of the managers complies with paragraph (a).

4. Nothing in this rule shall be construed as limiting or otherwise affecting—

(a) the power of the House or the Senate to consider and pass bills or joint resolutions, without regard to the procedures under clause 1, that would change the statutory limit on the public debt; or

(b) the rights of Members, Delegates, the Resident Commissioner, or committees with respect to the introduction, consideration, and reporting of such bills or joint resolutions.

5. In this rule the term “statutory limit on the public debt” means the maximum face amount of obligations issued under authority of chapter 31 of title 31, United States Code, and obligations guaranteed as to principal and interest by the

United States (except such guaranteed obligations as may be held by the Secretary of the Treasury), as determined under section 3101(b) of such title after the application of section 3101(a) of such title, that may be outstanding at any one time.

This rule (former rule XLIX) was added in the 96th Congress by Public Law 96-78 (93 Stat. 589) and was originally applicable to concurrent resolutions on the budget for fiscal years beginning on or after October 1, 1980 (fiscal 1981). However, in the 96th Congress (H. Res. 642, Apr. 23, 1980, p. 8800), the provisions of that public law amending the Rules of the House were made applicable to the third concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 1980 as well as the first concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal 1981 (H. Con. Res. 307, June 12, 1980, pp. 14505-19; see H.J. Res. 569 and H.J. Res. 570, June 13, 1980, p. 14609). Conforming changes were made in clauses 2 and 5 of this rule with the codification of title 31, United States Code, by Public Law 97-258 (96 Stat. 1066). The rule was amended in the 98th Congress (H. Res. 241, June 23, 1983, p. 17162) to reflect the enactment into law (P.L. 98-34) of a new permanent, rather than temporary, debt limit. Clause 2 of the rule was rewritten, and clause 1 modified, to change the form of the joint resolution engrossed pursuant to the rule in order to delete references to a temporary debt limit and to reflect instead changes in a permanent debt limit. The rules change also provided that where a budget resolution contains more than one public debt limit figure (for the current and the next fiscal year), only one joint resolution be engrossed, containing the debt limit figure for the current fiscal year with a time limitation, and the debt limit figure for the following fiscal year as the permanent limit. The date of final House action in adopting the conference report on the concurrent resolution on the budget, rather than the date of final Senate action, when later, is the appropriate date under this rule for deeming the House to have passed the joint resolution (July 14, 1986, p. 16316; Speaker Wright, June 25, 1987, p. 17424). Another conforming change in clause 1 was made in the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (P.L. 99-177, Dec. 12, 1985, p. 36209) to delete reference to a second concurrent resolution on the budget (no longer required under section 310 of the Budget Act). This rule was rendered inapplicable to a conference report on a concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2000 (H. Res. 131, Mar. 25, 1999, p. —). Before the House recodified its rules in the 106th Congress, this provision was found in former rule XLIX (H. Res. 5, Jan. 6, 1999, p. —).