CBO TESTIMONY

Statement of
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Congressional Budget Office

on
The Economic and Budget Outlook: Fiscal Years 1996-2000

before the
Committee on Finance
United States Senate

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NOTICE

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Chairman Packwood, Senator Moynihan, and Members of the Committee, I am pleased to be with you this morning to review the state of the economy and the budget. Next week, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) will publish *The Economic and Budget Outlook: Fiscal Years 1996-2000*, which describes our current views in considerable detail. We have provided advance copies for the Committee. My testimony summarizes that report. It also addresses a question about the difference between the budget and economic outlook in that report and the outlook in reports CBO issued before the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981 was enacted.

No fundamental change in the economic or budget situation has occurred since CBO published *The Economic and Budget Outlook: An Update* in August 1994. The economy may be a bit more robust in 1995 than had been anticipated at that time, but a likely slowdown in growth in 1996 leaves the long-term economic outlook little different from last summer's. CBO expects that the high levels of business investment and purchases of durable goods that spurred the economy to a 3.7 percent real rate of growth in 1994 will continue into the first part of 1995. Because the economy is already operating close to its potential (the level of gross domestic product, or GDP, consistent with a stable rate of inflation), that growth is expected to result in somewhat higher rates of inflation and interest. In turn, those higher interest rates are likely to slow growth by the end of 1995--cutting it to 2.5 percent in 1995 and 1.9 percent in 1996 and dampening inflationary pressures. In CBO's longer-term projections, average annual growth after 1996 is close to the 2.4 percent rate of

growth estimated for potential GDP; over the 1997-2000 period covered by those projections, inflation averages 3.4 percent and interest rates drift down.

CBO projects that the deficit will decline from the $203 billion registered in 1994 to $176 billion in 1995, the lowest level since 1989 and the lowest as a percentage of GDP (2.5 percent) since 1979. After reaching a trough in 1995, the deficit will rise to $207 billion in 1996 (2.8 percent of GDP), grow again in 1997, and then level off in 1998. Those projections assume no change in current policies governing taxes and mandatory spending; they also assume compliance with the limits on discretionary appropriations that are in place through 1998. Under the assumption that spending for discretionary programs increases at the rate of inflation after 1998, deficits will grow to $284 billion (3.1 percent of GDP) in 2000, the last year of CBO's regular projections. Under an alternative baseline that assumes that discretionary spending remains frozen at the dollar level of the 1998 caps, deficits increase only to $243 billion in 2000.

CBO's extended projections for 2001 through 2005, which are less detailed than those through 2000, show deficits continuing to mount in dollar terms through 2005 if discretionary spending is adjusted for inflation after 1998 (see Figure 1 at the end of this statement). Deficits also grow as a percentage of GDP--to 3.6 percent in 2005. There is no reason to believe that this trend will be reversed in the years after that; indeed, the growth in the deficit is likely to accelerate in the second decade of

the 21st century as large numbers of baby boomers become eligible for Social Security and Medicare benefits. Extended baseline projections that assume that discretionary spending is frozen at the 1998 level show deficits that are nearly constant from 2000 through 2005. As a percentage of GDP, the deficit in that baseline shrinks from 2.7 percent in 1998 to 2.1 percent in 2005.

Higher-than-anticipated interest payments and lower revenues, which are only partially offset by lower spending for medical care programs, have pushed up CBO's deficit projections for fiscal years 1995 through 1999 from last August's estimates by an average of almost $25 billion a year. After 2002, however, the deficits in the new extended projections are a little lower than the deficits projected in August.

The Congress is considering a constitutional amendment, which could go into effect as early as 2002, requiring a balanced budget. CBO currently projects a deficit of $322 billion for that year (assuming that discretionary spending is adjusted for inflation after 1998), which is only $3 billion more than the amount estimated last August. To illustrate the magnitude of the task facing those who would have to enact policies to comply with the balanced budget requirement, CBO has constructed an illustrative path leading to a balanced budget in 2002 that entails deficit reduction of $1.2 trillion over the 1996-2002 period. Major changes in current policies would be required to achieve deficit reduction on that scale.

CBO forecasts that the strong economic growth that the nation experienced throughout 1994 will continue into the first part of 1995. Because the economy is operating close to its potential, that growth will increase inflationary pressures and is likely to trigger additional efforts by the Federal Reserve Board to rein in the economy with higher short-term interest rates. In the CBO forecast, the resulting moderate slowdown at the end of 1995 and during 1996 will gradually bring GDP back in line with potential output without seriously disrupting the economy. Even with somewhat higher short-term growth and the slowdown in 1996, the current economic projections for 1997 through 1999 are little different from those CBO made last August.

The Forecast for 1995 and 1996

The robust growth that the U.S. economy experienced in 1994 is likely to continue through the first part of 1995 but will fade by the end of the year. The 3.7 percent increase in real output (on a fourth-quarter-to-fourth-quarter basis) and the creation of over 3 million new jobs in 1994 were achieved without an increase in inflation, but that performance is not likely to be repeated in 1995 (see Table 1). Because the economy is already operating close to its potential, it cannot persistently expand faster

than the growth of potential output--estimated at 2.4 percent a year by CBO--without triggering modestly higher inflation.

The Federal Reserve, which is determined to avoid any significant increase in inflation, raised the federal funds rate by 250 basis points (2.5 percentage points) in 1994 and is likely to further boost short-term interest rates in 1995. CBO forecasts that 90-day Treasury bill rates will average 6.2 percent in 1995--up from 3.2 percent in the first quarter of 1994. Rates for 10-year Treasury notes are expected to increase more modestly. The high rates of business investment and personal consumption of durable goods that drove the economy forward in 1994 apparently have not yet declined and will keep growth strong in the first part of 1995. However, by 1996, the cumulative effect of past and future hikes in interest rates should begin to bring the economy back in line with potential output. As a result, CBO expects that growth of real GDP will slow to 1.9 percent in 1996.

Unemployment will remain low in 1995--it is forecast to average 5.5 percent, compared with 6.1 percent in 1994--but will climb to 5.7 percent in 1996. Even at 1996's slightly higher level, unemployment will be below CBO's estimate of 6.0 percent for the nonaccelerating inflation rate of unemployment (NAIRU). A sustained unemployment rate below the NAIRU indicates a future increase in wage inflation. With unemployment below the NAIRU and GDP exceeding potential output, inflation is expected to rise in 1995 and 1996. Because the economy has not become too

overheated and is expected to cool down later this year, the forecast upswing in the consumer price index for all urban consumers (CPI-U) is modest--from 2.8 percent in 1994 to 3.2 percent in 1995 and 3.4 percent in 1996 (see Table 1).

CBO's forecast assumes that the recent and anticipated future increases in short-term interest rates engineered by the Federal Reserve will restrain the economy to an appropriate degree. If the continuing strong growth that CBO foresees in early 1995 does not take place--if the economy has already started to cool off--the expected additional monetary tightening will slow growth sooner and more sharply than anticipated. Alternatively, if the economy proves stronger and more resistant than expected to the anticipated increases in interest rates and it surges well above potential output, the Federal Reserve will probably respond with even higher interest rates to combat the risk of inflation. That stronger-than-expected growth and the Federal Reserve's response to it could usher in a cycle of boom and bust for the economy.

Some economists argue that potential output may be greater than CBO estimates, in which case the economy could grow at its current rate for some time without triggering higher inflation. The Federal Reserve, however, is unlikely to allow such growth unless the evidence for a shift in potential output is more compelling than it currently is.

Projections for 1997 Through 2000

CBO attempts to forecast the cyclical fluctuations in the economy only for the next two years. Beyond 1996, its projections are based on trends in fundamental factors that determine the potential growth of the economy, including growth in the labor force, productivity, and national saving.

CBO's projections follow a path that has the gap between GDP and potential GDP reaching its historical average level--with GDP 0.6 percent below potential--at the end of the projection period in 2000. Because CBO estimates that the level of GDP will exceed potential output in 1996, the average annual real growth projected for 1997 through 2000 is slightly below the estimated 2.4 percent rate of growth of potential output (see Table 2). Unemployment is expected to increase slightly to 6.0 percent, the estimated level of the NAIRU. Projected consumer price increases are assumed to average 3.4 percent a year over the period, with projected interest rates declining from the levels associated with efforts to slow the economy in 1995 and 1996.

Although CBO now projects that the deficits for fiscal years 1995 through 1999 will be almost $25 billion a year higher, on average, than it anticipated last August, the fundamental budget outlook is not very different from the one CBO projected then. Moreover, there has been no substantial change in CBO's deficit projections since its report in September 1993, which for the first time reflected the more than $400 billion in deficit reduction enacted in the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 (see Figure 2). The deficit is still expected to fall in 1995 to its lowest level since 1989 and its lowest point as a percentage of GDP since 1979. As was also the case in August, the deficit is projected to begin rising again in 1996. CBO's extended budget projections show that trend continuing through 2005 if spending for discretionary programs increases at the rate of inflation after 1998. After 2002, currently projected deficits are slightly lower than the deficits forecast in August.

The Outlook for the Deficit

Since 1992's record-high shortfall of $290 billion, the deficit has declined to $255 billion (4.0 percent of GDP) in 1993 and $203 billion (3.1 percent of GDP) in 1994. (Although a record in dollar terms, the 1992 deficit as a percentage of GDP was far short--at 4.9 percent--of even a postwar record.) CBO projects that the deficit will

decline for a third straight year to $176 billion (2.5 percent of GDP) in 1995 (see Table 3). That gratifying trend is expected to end next year, however, with the deficit climbing under current laws to $207 billion (2.8 percent of GDP) in 1996 and $224 billion (2.9 percent of GDP) in 1997 before leveling off in 1998.

The standardized-employment deficit, which is an estimate of the deficit that would occur if the economy was operating at its potential, is of interest because it is a measure of the fiscal posture of the federal budget without the cyclical effects of the economy. When the economy is operating below potential, the deficit swells as a result of reductions in revenues and increased spending for programs such as unemployment insurance. When the economy is operating above potential, revenues are increased and spending is lower. Because in CBO's forecast the economy will be operating close to potential throughout the 1995-2000 period, the projected standardized-employment deficits differ little from the projected total deficits. Despite that, a look at the standardized-employment deficit as a percentage of potential GDP is still illuminating. That measure varies only slightly from year to year during the 1994-1998 period, which makes it clear that the fiscal stance of the budget changes hardly at all during that time.

CBO's baseline projections for mandatory spending programs and taxes represent the outlays and revenues that will result if no changes are made in the laws governing those parts of the budget. The projections for discretionary spending

(spending controlled by annual appropriations) assume compliance with the discretionary spending limits for 1996 through 1998 established for general-purpose appropriations in the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 and for specific anticrime appropriations in the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994. Because no level of discretionary spending is set by law for the years after 1998, CBO makes two different projections of the deficit for 1999 and later years. In one projection, discretionary spending grows at the rate of inflation; the purchasing power of the appropriations is thus held constant at the 1998 level. In the other, discretionary spending is frozen at the 1998 dollar level.

In the baseline projections with discretionary spending adjusted for inflation after 1998, the deficit resumes its upward path after the pause in 1998. By 2000, the last year of CBO's regular projections, the deficit of $284 billion is almost back to the record level of 1992 (although at 3.1 percent, it is well below the 1992 deficit as a percentage of GDP). CBO's extended projections show deficits that continue to climb after 2000, reaching $421 billion (3.6 percent of GDP) in 2005. The mounting deficits continue to be fueled primarily by increases in Medicaid and Medicare, even though projected costs for those programs are somewhat lower than CBO had estimated last August. All spending other than that for Medicaid and Medicare is projected to grow at an average rate of about 5 percent a year between 1998 and 2005, slightly slower than the rise in revenues. Projected spending for the two big

federal health programs, however, increases at an average rate of almost 10 percent a year after 1998.

In the baseline projections without inflation adjustments for discretionary spending after 1998, deficits level off at around $240 billion a year from 1999 through 2005. (The projected deficit of $242 billion for 2005 is equal to 2.1 percent of GDP.) Freezing discretionary appropriations at the 1998 dollar level through 2005 would result in funding for discretionary programs in 2005 that had about 27 percent less purchasing power than the 1995 appropriations. If total discretionary spending was frozen at the nominal 1998 level but defense spending was preserved at the 1995 funding level adjusted for inflation, the money available for all other discretionary programs in 2005 would have less than half the purchasing power of the 1995 appropriations for those programs.

All mandatory spending is the same in both baselines, except that interest payments reflect the lower deficits and debt in the version that does not adjust discretionary spending for inflation after 1998.

Changes in the Projections

The deficits that CBO currently projects for 1995 through 1999 are almost $25 billion a year higher, on average, than those projected last August (see Table 4). Yet despite those increases, there has been no fundamental change in the deficit outlook. In fact, by 2003, the deficits in CBO's current extended projections are slightly lower than the deficits CBO projected in August.

Legislation enacted since then has had very little effect on the deficit outlook. The two most significant laws were an act making major changes in the federal crop insurance program in hopes of avoiding future ad hoc disaster assistance to farmers and an act implementing the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). The crop insurance legislation increased estimates of the deficit by almost $1 billion a year. Because CBO's baseline projections were made on the basis of current law, they did not include any spending that might result from the enactment of future ad hoc disaster bills. Therefore, reducing the likelihood of such legislation did not produce savings that could offset the higher spending for crop insurance. The GATT implementing legislation added almost $3 billion to deficits over the 1995-1999 period because losses in revenues from lower tariffs were not completely offset by other revenue increases and spending cuts.

Changes in the economic forecast since August have had a greater effect on deficit projections than did legislation. Economic changes have pushed down projected revenues by $9 billion in 1996 and $8 billion in 1997, largely because of lower wage and salary income than had been forecast in August. More significantly, the higher interest rates in the new forecast have driven up projected federal interest payments by more than $15 billion a year, on average, in 1996 through 1999.

Taken altogether, technical reestimates--those changes that cannot be attributed to legislation or revisions in the economic forecast--have had little impact on projections of the deficit. But looking only at the total effect masks some significant changes. Projected Medicaid spending is lower in every year--by as much as $13 billion in 1999--than was estimated in August, reflecting actual 1994 outlays that were lower than expected and evidence that the rapid growth in that program has slowed. Medicare expenditures are down only slightly over the 1995-1999 period, but CBO's extended forecasts have significantly lower spending for Medicare as well as Medicaid in the years after 2000. The Medicaid reductions in 1995 through 2000, however, are more than offset by technical reestimates that bring down projected revenues to reflect smaller-than-anticipated tax collections in 1994 and increased spending for a variety of programs other than Medicare and Medicaid.

THE BUDGET OUTLOOK DIFFERS FROM THE OUTLOOK IN 1980 AND 1981

At the request of Chairman Packwood, CBO has also examined how the current outlook compares with the economic forecast and budget projections CBO made before the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981 was enacted. The many changes in budget policy and presentation made since 1981 limit our ability to provide a detailed analysis of the differences between projections that are so widely separated in time. Nevertheless, we can explain the primary reasons for the fundamental differences between the outlook now and the outlook then.

Unlike the current *Economic and Budget Outlook,* CBO's budget reports issued before enactment of the 1981 tax cuts routinely projected that a continuation of current tax and spending laws would lead to large budget surpluses. CBO also warned that such levels of taxes and spending would act as a drag on the economy.

The primary reason for those projections was that high inflation was expected to drive up revenues dramatically. Because key features of the federal individual income tax were not automatically adjusted for inflation, periods of high inflation--such as the late 1970s and early 1980s--pushed individuals into higher tax rate brackets and caused revenues to increase rapidly. In response, policymakers cut taxes every few years on an ad hoc basis--five times in the 1970s, for instance.

Illustrating this dilemma, in its February 1980 report *Five-Year Budget Projections: Fiscal Years 1981-1985*, CBO projected that revenues collected under current tax law would climb from about 21 percent of GNP in 1981 to 24 percent by 1985. Simple arithmetic pointed to enormous surpluses in the out-years. For example, current-law revenues exceeded outlays by a projected $98 billion for 1984 and $178 billion for 1985. Similarly, in its July 1981 report *Baseline Budget Projections: Fiscal Years 1982-1986*, CBO projected budget surpluses of between $148 billion and $209 billion for 1986, depending on the economic assumptions used.

In the same report, CBO estimated that the 1981 tax cuts and other policies that were called for in the May 1981 budget resolution would generate a balanced budget or a small deficit (roughly $50 billion) by 1984--again, depending on the economic assumptions employed.

That budget background led to the 1981 tax cuts. Given the best information available at that time, the Congress and the Administration reasonably thought that significant budget surpluses loomed under current law. Analysts differed, however, on whether the 1981 tax cuts would put the government on a balanced-budget footing or would lead to small budget deficits.

As it turned out, the federal government ran budget deficits of about $200 billion a year from 1983 through 1986. Economic performance was poorer than

envisioned in projections of either CBO or the Administration at the time of the 1981 tax bill. The economy plunged into recession, registered negative growth in 1982, and then recovered. The rate of inflation dropped sharply. By 1986, nominal gross national product was about $700 billion smaller than assumed in 1981, which caused a corresponding drop in tax revenues. Furthermore, interest rates remained high despite the plunge in inflation. It is reasonable, then, to ascribe nearly all of the underestimate of deficits during that period to errors in economic forecasts.

ILLUSTRATIVE PATH TO A BALANCED BUDGET

A constitutional amendment requiring a balanced federal budget will be considered during the early days of the 104th Congress. If the Congress adopts such an amendment this year and three-quarters of the state legislatures ratify it over the next few years, the requirement could apply to the budget for fiscal year 2002. If the budget is to be balanced by 2002, it is important that the Congress and the President begin immediately to put into effect policies that will achieve that goal. According to CBO's latest projections of a baseline that adjusts discretionary spending for inflation after 1998, some combination of spending cuts and tax increases totaling $322 billion in 2002 would be needed to eliminate the deficit in that year. The amounts of deficit reduction called for in the years preceding 2002 depend on both the exact policies adopted and when the process is begun.

For illustrative purposes, CBO has laid out one of many possible paths to a balanced budget in 2002 (see Table 5). Starting from a baseline that assumes that discretionary spending is adjusted for inflation after 1998, that path first shows the savings that would be achieved by freezing discretionary spending through 2002 at the dollar level of the 1998 cap. Such a freeze, along with the resulting debt-service effects, would produce $89 billion of the required savings of $322 billion in 2002. Under the freeze policy, the buying power of total discretionary appropriations in 2002 would be approximately 20 percent less than in 1995.

CBO also built into its illustrative path a possible course of savings from further policy changes. The amounts of those savings are not based on the adoption of any particular set of policies; they do assume, however, that policy changes are phased in between 1996 and 1999 in a pattern that is similar to the changes in mandatory spending enacted in the last two major efforts at deficit reduction in 1990 and 1993. After 1999, the assumed savings increase at the baseline rate of growth for entitlement and other mandatory spending, excluding Social Security--implying that the cuts implemented in earlier years have a permanent effect but no additional policy changes have been made. If those savings were achieved entirely out of entitlement and other mandatory programs (excluding Social Security), they would represent about a 20 percent reduction from current-policy levels for those programs.

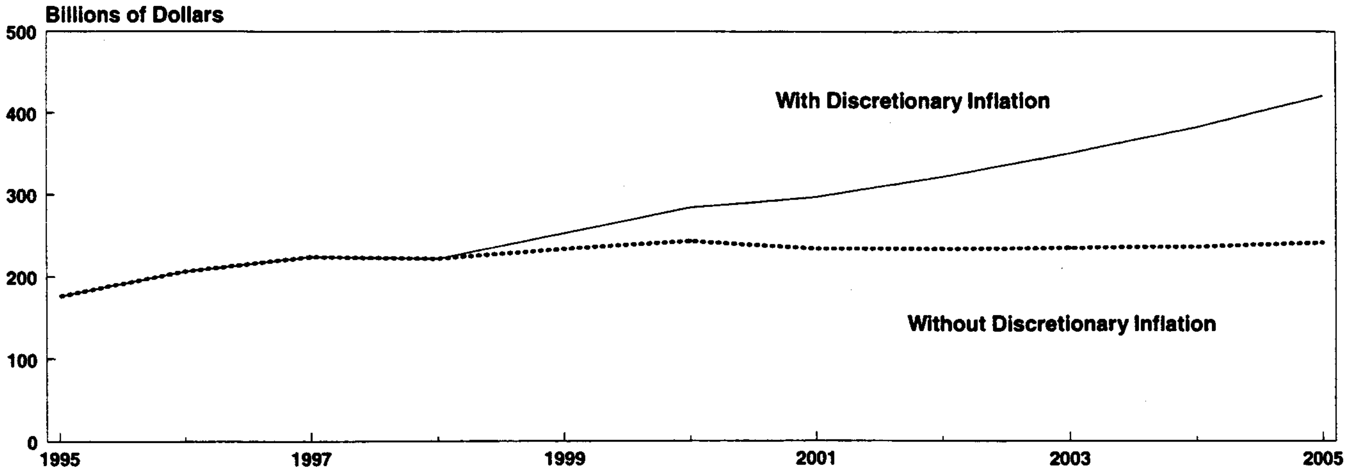
Over the entire 1996-2002 period, the savings in CBO's illustrative path that result directly from policy changes total more than $1 trillion (in relation to a baseline that adjusts discretionary spending for inflation after 1998). When the resulting savings in debt-service payments are included, the total exceeds $1.2 trillion. As noted, this path and the resulting $1.2 trillion in savings are illustrative only; the actual amount of cumulative deficit reduction over the 1996-2002 period will depend on the timing and exact nature of the policies enacted to achieve balance in 2002.

The required savings from policy changes would be smaller and the debt-service savings greater if, as CBO anticipates, ongoing deficit reduction efforts over this period result in lower interest rates. CBO believes that by 2000, interest rates could be as much as 1 percentage point lower than it currently forecasts if spending cuts and tax increases that would lead to a balanced budget have been enacted and the financial markets are convinced that policymakers will maintain those policies. CBO estimates that such a drop in interest rates would lower projected federal interest payments--and the amount of savings from policy changes needed to balance the budget--by almost $140 billion over the 1996-2002 period.

CONCLUSION

CBO's most recent economic and budget projections underscore the challenge facing policymakers who may have to enact the spending cuts or tax increases needed to balance the budget by 2002. Although the long-term budget outlook is no worse now than it was last August, the new projections emphasize that the deficit can be eliminated only through major changes in current policies.

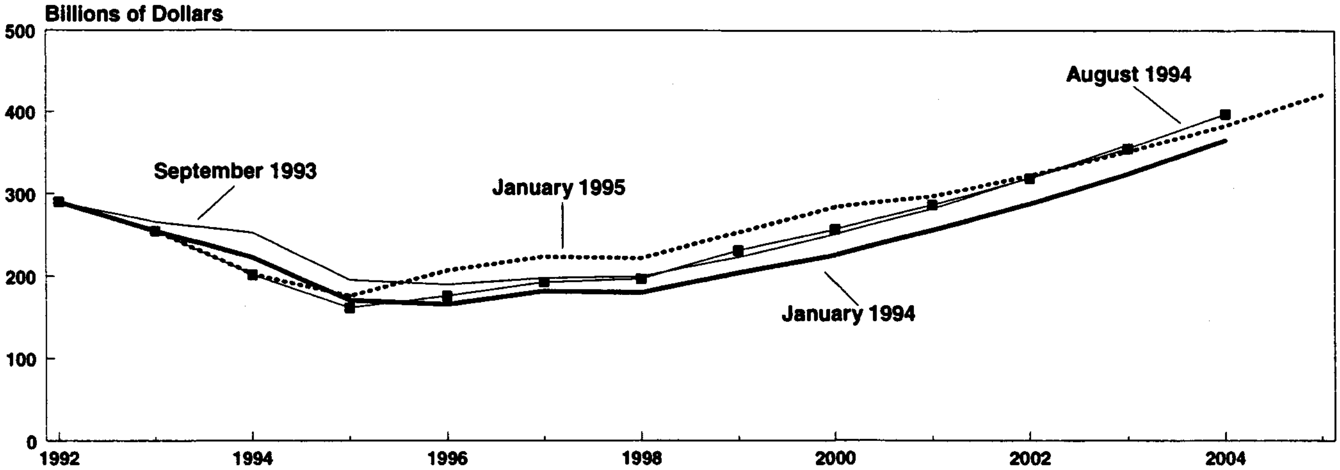
Figure 1.
Comparison of CBO Projections With and Without Discretionary Inflation After 1998 (By fiscal year)



SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office.

NOTE: Caps on discretionary spending are set by law through 1998. Measures of the deficit "with discretionary inflation" assume that discretionary spending grows at the rate of inflation after 1998. Measures of the deficit "without discretionary inflation" assume that discretionary spending remains frozen in dollar terms at the level of the 1998 caps.

Figure 2.
Comparison of CBO Deficit Projections (By fiscal year)



SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office.

NOTE: The projections assume that discretionary spending rises with inflation after the caps expire in 1998.

Table 1.
Comparison of Forecasts for 1995 and 1996

	Actual 1993	Estimated 1994	Forecast 1995	Forecast 1996
		Fourth Quarter to Fourth Quarter (Percentage change)		
Nominal GDP				
CBO	5.0	6.3	5.3	4.7
Blue Chip	5.0	6.5	5.7	5.4
Real GDP[a]				
CBO	3.1	3.7	2.5	1.9
Blue Chip	3.1	3.8	2.5	2.2
Implicit GDP Deflator				
CBO	1.8	2.5	2.8	2.8
Blue Chip	1.8	2.6	3.1	3.2
Consumer Price Index[b]				
CBO	2.7	2.8	3.2	3.4
Blue Chip	2.7	2.8	3.5	3.5
		Calendar Year Averages (Percent)		
Civilian Unemployment Rate				
CBO	6.8	6.1	5.5	5.7
Blue Chip	6.8	6.1	5.6	5.7
Three-Month Treasury Bill Rate				
CBO	3.0	4.2	6.2	5.7
Blue Chip	3.0	4.2	6.2	6.1
Ten-Year Treasury Note Rate				
CBO	5.9	7.1	7.7	7.0
Blue Chip[c]	5.9	7.1	7.9	7.6

SOURCES: Congressional Budget Office; Eggert Economic Enterprises, Inc., *Blue Chip Economic Indicators* (January 10, 1995); Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis.

NOTE: The *Blue Chip* forecasts are based on a survey of 50 private forecasters.

a. Based on constant 1987 dollars.

b. The consumer price index for all urban consumers (CPI-U).

c. *Blue Chip* does not project a 10-year note rate. The values shown here for the 10-year note rate are based on the *Blue Chip* projections of the Aaa bond rate, adjusted by CBO to reflect the estimated spread between Aaa bonds and 10-year Treasury notes.

Table 2.
The Economic Forecast and Projections (By calendar year)

	Estimated	Forecast		Projected			
	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Nominal GDP (Billions of dollars)	6,735	7,127	7,456	7,847	8,256	8,680	9,128
Real GDP (Billions of 1987 dollars)	5,338	5,505	5,602	5,736	5,870	6,004	6,141
Real GDP (Percentage change)	4.0	3.1	1.8	2.4	2.3	2.3	2.3
Implicit GDP Deflator (Percentage change)	2.1	2.6	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8
CPI-U (Percentage change)[a]	2.6	3.1	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4
Unemployment Rate (Percent)	6.1	5.5	5.7	5.8	5.9	6.0	6.0
Three-Month Treasury Bill Rate (Percent)	4.2	6.2	5.7	5.3	5.1	5.1	5.1
Ten-Year Treasury Note Rate (Percent)	7.1	7.7	7.0	6.7	6.7	6.7	6.7

SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office.

a. CPI-U is the consumer price index for all urban consumers.

Table 3.
CBO Deficit Projections (By fiscal year)

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
			In Billions of Dollars				
Baseline Total Deficit							
With discretionary inflation after 1998	203	176	207	224	222	253	284
Without discretionary inflation after 1998	203	176	207	224	222	234	243
Standardized-Employment Deficit[a]							
With discretionary inflation after 1998	187	200	216	223	221	247	273
Without discretionary inflation after 1998	187	200	216	223	221	228	233
			As a Percentage of GDP				
Baseline Total Deficit							
With discretionary inflation after 1998	3.1	2.5	2.8	2.9	2.7	3.0	3.1
Without discretionary inflation after 1998	3.1	2.5	2.8	2.9	2.7	2.7	2.7
Standardized-Employment Deficit[b]							
With discretionary inflation after 1998	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.9	2.7	2.9	3.0
Without discretionary inflation after 1998	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.9	2.7	2.6	2.6

SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office.

NOTE: Caps on discretionary spending are set by law through 1998. Measures of the deficit "with discretionary inflation" assume that discretionary spending grows at the rate of inflation after 1998. Measures of the deficit "without discretionary inflation" assume that discretionary spending remains frozen in dollar terms at the level of the 1998 caps.

a. Excludes the cyclical deficit and spending for deposit insurance.

b. Shown as a percentage of potential gross domestic product.

Table 4.
Changes in CBO Deficit Projections (By fiscal year, in billions of dollars)

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
August 1994 Baseline Total Deficit with Discretionary Inflation After 1998	162	176	193	197	231
Changes					
Policy changes	2	2	2	3	3
Economic assumptions					
Revenues[a]	2	9	8	3	b
Net interest	8	16	17	15	15
Other outlays	b	b	1	2	2
Subtotal	10	25	27	20	17
Technical reestimates					
Revenues[a]	6	5	6	9	11
Deposit insurance[c]	1	3	b	b	1
Medicaid and Medicare	-7	-6	-8	-11	-15
Net interest[c]	b	-1	b	b	1
Other outlays	b	5	4	3	5
Subtotal	1	5	2	2	2
Total	13	31	31	26	22
January 1995 Baseline Total Deficit with Discretionary Inflation After 1998	176	207	224	222	253

SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office.

NOTE: Caps on discretionary spending are set by law through 1998. Measures of the deficit "with discretionary inflation" assume that discretionary spending grows at the rate of inflation after 1998.

a. Revenue reductions are shown with a positive sign because they increase the deficit.

b. Less than $500 million.

c. Excludes changes in interest paid by deposit insurance agencies to the Treasury. These interest payments are intrabudgetary and do not affect the deficit.

Table 5.
Illustrative Deficit Reduction Path (By fiscal year, in billions of dollars)

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	1996-2002
CBO January Baseline Deficit with Discretionary Inflation After 1998	176	207	224	222	253	284	297	322	n.a.
Freeze Discretionary Outlays After 1998									
Discretionary reduction	0	0	0	0	-19	-38	-58	-78	-193
Debt service	0	0	0	0	-1	-2	-6	-10	-19
Total Deficit Reduction	0	0	0	0	-19	-40	-63	-89	-212
CBO January Baseline Deficit Without Discretionary Inflation After 1998	176	207	224	222	234	243	234	234	n.a.
Additional Deficit Reduction									
Policy changes[a]	0	-32	-65	-97	-145	-156	-168	-180	-843
Debt service	0	-1	-4	-10	-18	-28	-40	-54	-156
Total Deficit Reduction	0	-33	-69	-106	-163	-184	-208	-234	-998
Resulting Deficit	176	174	155	116	71	59	26	b	n.a.
Total Change from Baseline Deficit with Discretionary Inflation After 1998									
Policy changes	0	-32	-65	-97	-164	-194	-225	-259	-1,035
Debt service	0	-1	-4	-10	-19	-31	-46	-64	-175
Total Deficit Reduction	0	-33	-69	-106	-182	-225	-271	-322	-1,210

SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office.

NOTES: Caps on discretionary spending are set by law through 1998. Measures of the deficit "with discretionary inflation" assume that discretionary spending grows at the rate of inflation after 1998. Measures of the deficit "without discretionary inflation" assume that discretionary spending remains frozen in dollar terms at the level of the 1998 caps.

n.a. = not applicable.

a. These changes represent only one of a large number of possible paths that would lead to a balanced budget. The exact path depends on when deficit reduction begins and the specific policies adopted by the Congress and the President. The path illustrated in this table is not based on any specific policy assumptions but does assume that policies are fully phased in by 1999.

b. Surplus of less than $500 million.