

Federal Budget Reconciliation Guidelines

1. Gather supplies:
 - a. The group needs a computer to access the Debt Fixer tool at <http://www.crfb.org/debtfixer/>
 - b. Each person needs a Voting Record sheet and a pen to take notes
2. Select group members for two key roles:
 - a. Chief Whip: responsible for keeping the negotiation moving, calling the vote, and wielding the computer.
 - b. Record-Keeper: responsible for keeping track of votes, final decisions, points of negotiation, and the group's biggest challenges.
3. Ground Rules:
 - a. A majority vote is needed to finalize decisions.
 - b. Individuals have the right to explain their views and attempt to negotiate, within a reasonable timeframe.
 - c. The goal is to decrease the deficit while also creating a budget which manages the priorities and values of the United States. Each person will interpret those priorities differently, and there is no "right" answer.
 - d. If the group does not complete the budget negotiation by the end of the allotted time, America goes into a government shutdown! Avoid at all costs.
 - e. Listen respectfully to your group members, allow everyone to speak, and be conscious not to allow a few voices to dominate the conversation. Recognize that even though this is just an exercise, the issues being discussed might be personal or emotional for group members, so avoid aggressive or inconsiderate language.
4. Strategies:
 - a. Each group will find what process works best for them, but these strategies have worked for previous groups.
 - b. Start with the costly issues in each section (defense, healthcare, etc.) and then move quickly through the small issues.
 - c. After an initial draft of the budget is complete, revisit your key issues and negotiate with group members to get closer to your priorities.
 - d. Keep track of which votes were close and what your group members' priorities are to inform your negotiating platform.
 - e. Do not spend too much time on any one issue, because the budget is large and government shutdowns hurt the country.