



February 1, 2019

Support the CBO Show Your Work Act, S. 278

On behalf of FreedomWorks' activist community, I urge you to contact your senators and ask them to cosponsor the CBO Show Your Work Act, S. 278. Introduced by Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah), the CBO Show Your Work Act would require the Congressional Budget Office to make its models and data available to Congress and the public.

Created by the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Act of 1974, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) provides members and staff of the House and Senate with fiscal and economic analyses of legislation and budget forecasts. The CBO, however, is not currently required to show the models and data on which it makes its assumptions.

While the CBO is an independent, nonpartisan agency, the agency has been criticized for providing inaccurate analyses and forecasts to Congress, including economic projections that failed to predict a major recession and wildly inaccurate assumptions about the impact of the Affordable Care Act. More recently, the CBO provided coverage estimates on health insurance reform legislation guided by a baseline that was not grounded in reality.

“Congress does need a scorekeeper to provide budgetary estimates for the policy changes it considers. But at a bare minimum, that scorekeeper should be forced to show how its models work,” Sen. Lee wrote after introducing the bill in the 115th Congress. “Currently the CBO doesn't have to do that. It's a ‘black box,’ a secret formula even Congress can't be allowed to see, yet which the House and Senate must treat as if they were handed down on stone tablets at Mt. Sinai.”

The CBO Show Your Work Act would require the CBO to make the models and data employed to produce its analyses and cost estimates, as well as any details that were used, available to Congress and on the agency's website. This much-needed transparency will allow interested parties outside of Congress to hold the CBO accountable.

“[The CBO Show Your Work Act] would hold CBO to the same standard the American Economic Association's ‘Data Availability Policy’ sets for all academic economists: requiring all paper authors to ensure their data ‘are readily available to any researcher for purposes of replication,’” Sen. Lee added.

Analyses and estimates produced by the CBO have a tremendous impact on public policy debates inside the House of Representatives and the Senate. It is important that the models and data used to come to the conclusions that the CBO reaches are open to the public. For these reasons, I urge you to contact your senators and ask them to cosponsor the CBO Show Your Work Act, S. 278.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam Brandon', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Adam Brandon
President, FreedomWorks