



THE CONCORD
COALITION

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REVISED ONLINE GAME LETS PLAYERS TRY THEIR HANDS AT FEDERAL DEFICIT REDUCTION

WASHINGTON -- While lawmakers are working on appropriations bills to fund the government next year, they seem to have lost interest in trying to meet the country's long-term fiscal challenges. But the newly updated Federal Budget Challenge (www.federalbudgetchallenge.org) gives citizens across the country a chance to succeed where Congress has thrown in the towel, letting users select policies to put the country on a fiscally sustainable path.

Two nonpartisan, nonprofit organizations -- Next 10 and The Concord Coalition -- created the Federal Budget Challenge in 2009. It lets players look out over the next 10 years and weigh some of the many different deficit-reduction options that are available to elected officials. The new version includes the most up-to-date options as presented by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office.

For example, players can decide what to do about the caps on discretionary spending that were put in place by the Budget Control Act of 2011. They can allow the caps to continue, or remove them and allow discretionary spending to grow with inflation or the economy.

“Despite recent improvements in the near-term budget picture, fiscal policy remains on an unsustainable path,” says Robert L. Bixby, Concord’s executive director. “This generation has been presented with significant challenges that we must begin to solve. The Federal Budget Challenge allows us to examine areas such as health care costs, taxes, education programs and

defense spending, and also lets more Americans join the conversation about the tough choices facing our country.”

The online game prompts users to answer important questions about their priorities for America’s future. For example:

1. How can we contain spending by federal health care programs while ensuring access to coverage and care?
2. Should additional tax revenue be used to reduce federal borrowing?
3. Should the federal government invest more in research and development?
4. How should we increase economic growth and job creation?
5. How should we secure Social Security and Medicare for future generations?
6. Should we increase or decrease national security funding in the years ahead?

As players consider such questions, the Federal Budget Challenge lets them see how their decisions might impact the deficit in the years ahead. Each option includes background information along with both supporting and opposing arguments.

In Washington, the chaotic federal budget process in recent years has often led to poor decision-making and unrealistic funding plans.

“Long-term, the federal deficit is projected to grow significantly to \$7.6 trillion over the next ten years,” said F. Noel Perry, founder of Next 10. “These issues directly impact American voters, who are largely shut out of the budget process.”

The exercise features interactive social networking tools and touch-screen capability. Users can take the Challenge as a group and send their results to friends.

The Challenge is based on Concord’s “Principles and Priorities” exercise, which has been used in hundreds of classrooms and public programs across the country, including some hosted by members of Congress from both parties. The budget challenge platform was originally developed by Next 10.

The updated exercise is available at www.federalbudgetchallenge.org.

Web Editors: Federal Budget Challenge graphics are available upon request to Next Ten.

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Next 10 is an independent, nonpartisan organization focused on innovation and the intersection of the economy, the environment, and quality of life issues for all Californians. Next 10 funds research by leading experts on complex state issues. www.next10.org

The Concord Coalition is a nonpartisan, grassroots organization dedicated to educating the public about the causes and consequences of federal budget deficits, the long-term challenges facing America's unsustainable entitlement programs, and how to build a sound foundation for economic growth. www.concordcoalition.org