



CHAIR JODEY ARRINGTON

HOUSE BUDGET COMMITTEE

Op-Ed, The Hill: We Need to Sound the Alarm, and Find Solution to the Mounting Spending Crisis

WASHINGTON, D.C. – This week, House Budget Committee Chairman Jodey Arrington (R-TX) penned an [Op-Ed](#) in The Hill [Sounding the Alarm](#) about our need for deficit reduction.

CHAIRMAN ARRINGTON IN THE HILL

Via [The Hill](#):

The House will soon take up the first of the 12 annual appropriations bills, measures intended to fund the government for another year. Expect the usual cacophony of arguments over defense versus non-defense priorities, policy riders, earmarks and the like. All for a process that observers agree will end in disagreement and no definitive conclusion until after — if not well after — the November election.

*Even more troubling is that, for all the drama attached to it, the appropriations process represents a significantly declining share of the overall budget — **roughly 30 percent today**, down from over 50 percent in the 1970s, and is projected to shrink to about 20 percent over the next decade, according to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO).*

That means Congress spends more and more time each year fighting over less and less of the fiscal pie. Meanwhile, the unsustainable and unchecked growth of automatic federal spending goes unaddressed and largely undiscussed. It is completely backwards — and it is a grave mistake.



*Unchecked mandatory spending on programs like Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security and welfare represent a growing threat to our economic security and potentially our way of life. The CBO projects that mandatory spending will consume nearly 80 percent of federal spending by 2034. This growth is the primary driver of our burgeoning debt, which is **expected to reach \$54 trillion over the next decade**. This means every household in America will owe approximately \$381,000 on that balance.*

*Moreover, because of this red ink, interest payments on our debt are the fastest-growing part of the federal budget, with annual payments in 2024 **projected to be \$870 billion**. This exceeds our spending on national defense (\$817 billion), Medicaid (\$557 billion), veterans' benefits (\$181 billion) and many other critical priorities.*

Why do we devote excessive attention to budget issues of diminishing relevance instead of matters of growing — and potentially existential — significance? The answer embodies just how broken the incentive structure for Congress has become.

The process itself incentivizes action — barely — on discretionary spending but condones outright inaction on mandatory spending. If Congress fails to complete the appropriations process on time — which has been the case every year since 1996 — it can extend the process indefinitely, but it must at least act or the government shuts down. Regardless of how long the process unfolds, mandatory spending continues to grow unchecked year after year.

Politically, appropriations debates revolve around how much more to spend. Indeed, every discretionary program increases annually by inflation. So according to Washington's Alice in Wonderland rules, even a spending "freeze" can be portrayed as a cut.

In contrast, debates on reforms to mandatory spending default to how much to cut, creating political dissonance for lawmakers and special interests. As a result, many in Congress fear the political consequences of addressing — or even just discussing — mandatory spending.

Finally, political leadership makes a difference. Telling the truth about our fiscal situation is difficult, especially when it involves hard truths.



Our country has dug a very deep hole for itself — especially given the unbridled spending under the Biden administration, that now has our debt booming by \$850 billion every hundred days. As a result, our interest payments are the fastest growing part of the federal government. Today, nearly 60 cents of every dollar the government borrows goes to paying interest on our debt.

Imagine a family that continually needed to take out new loans to get by but had to divert almost two-thirds of every loan just to pay interest on the past money they borrowed. This is the reality we face.

Get ready for summer reruns of long days and rancorous nights around funding the government. But as you tune in, keep in mind that all this noise is blocking out the blaring signal in front of us. It's time for Congress to start doing more than worrying about a small fraction of federal spending. Ignoring the mandatory side of the budget leaves us woefully unprepared for the looming fiscal challenges of the future.

We need more leaders in Washington to sound the alarm, educate the public, offer plans and come together to find solutions to this mounting economic and moral crisis — before it is too late.”

THE BOTTOM LINE

Mandatory spending continues growing as a share of the Federal Budget, while Congress fights over less and less of the fiscal pie every year. Leaving unsustainable and unchecked growth of automatic federal spending unaddressed and largely undiscussed is a grave mistake.

Chairman Arrington argues that it will take courage to confront ballooning mandatory spending to **Reverse the Curse** and get our fiscal house in order.

