



*it can be done remotely. Committee chairs also have the option of using an online portal for the public to submit written testimony online if they do not wish to travel.*

There's still many more unanswered questions but we hope to get more clarity as session progresses.

## The Budget Reconciliation Process – US Congress

My kids have been watching Hamilton on repeat throughout the pandemic, so I was tempted to break this segment out into song but don't worry, I couldn't make it rhyme. If you want a full explanation, [here's a good article](#). And here is a [good video to explain more](#).

You're likely to hear about this in the news in the next few months so here is a simplified explanation.

What is the budget reconciliation process?

In the federal Congressional Budget Act of 1974, it allowed for "budget reconciliation." The intent of this process was to quickly expedite minor budget adjustments without requiring the hassle of regular procedure. However, it has used in the past decade as a way to get major pieces of legislation through a divided Senate.

Why does it matter?

During the reconciliation process, any Senator can filibuster a spending bill, stopping it in its tracks until they give up or the other side gives in. Normally to silence a filibuster it takes a super majority (60 votes) to invoke cloture (shhhh). However, due to the original intention of the reconciliation process, i.e. getting minor adjustments through quickly, it only takes a simple majority (51 senate votes) to silence a filibuster and move the bill along. Essentially it gives the majority party the ability to ignore the other party and normal procedure to get highly partisan budget bills through.

Are there ways to stop the process?

Yes, if the Byrd rule is enacted - which says, "no way, this has nothing to do with the budget process". Republicans who disagree with the budget reconciliation bill will likely be looking for ways to enact this rule.

Why do we care right now?

In the recent election, the balance swayed to an even 50:50 split (the 2 independents caucus with Democrats) and the Vice President delivers the tie-breaking vote, giving Democrats 51 votes. Tax changes, stimulus programs, green energy, infrastructure projects etc. all have major implications for agriculture (and the USDA) and these topics could be addressed through the budget reconciliation process.



Questions or Comments?

In the UK, Cloture is called Guillotine, nice.

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