Hamline University Professor Says Federal Budget Process Broken, Congress Needs to Authorize Automatic Continuing Resolution to Prevent FutureShutdowns

*Hamline University Professor David Schultz contends in an op-ed that the federal budget process is broken and the only solution to preventing future government shutdowns is to enact automatic continuing resolutions.*

SAINT PAUL, Minn. (PRWEB) -- February 06, 2019 -- Hamline University professor David Schultz, noted expert on American politics and law argues in a recent op-ed in *The Hill* entitled “The Lesson of the Shutdown and Budget Politics—Protect Washington From Itself,” that the federal budget process is out of date, broken, and that the only way to prevent future government shutdowns is for Congress to enact automatic continuing resolutions.

Professor Schultz’s oped seeks to explain both the reasons why the federal government continues to shutdown and ways to avoid it in the future. According to Schultz: “There are three truths when it comes to federal spending. The first is that the government can only spend money when it has the statutory authority to do so. The second truth is that budgets reflect political choices. The third truth is that the history of US politics can be told through budgeting, and it tells us that no process will work if there is fundamental disagreement over taxes and spending priorities. The reason why the federal government keeps shutting down is both a combination of a defective budget process but also the increased polarization Washington that makes it impossible for anyone to agree to anything.”

In an essay that provides a short concise history of budgeting, Schultz points to the failures of the 1974 Congressional Budget and Impoundment Act, the law which created the current process for making the budget. Since its enactment, there have been only four budget passed on time and there have been a total of 20 funding gaps, some of which produced partial government shutdowns. The 1974 act, according to Schultz, presupposed that the two parties shared common values about what government should do, but since they do not, their disagreements and polarization have only made a bad budget process worse.

Schultz, who has recently also written on presidential emergency powers, executive orders, impeachment, and whether a sitting president can be indicted for a crime, is skeptical that there will be an agreement to avert another shutdown come February 15. “While it is possible that a compromise could be crafted, Trump’s State of the Union speech and the Democrats’ reaction to it are not hopeful signs, proving again that the current budget process is beyond repair,” says Schultz.

So what is to be done in an era when the budget process is broken and parties are polarized? Schultz declares: “There is at least one partial solution, enact into law an automatic continuing resolution procedure that would authorize funding for the government to stay open even if no budget or ordinary continuing legislation is adopted.” An automatic continuing resolution is not a permanent fix, but it would be a first step is repairing a broken process and protecting Congress from its own worst impulses.

David Schultz is a professor of political science at Hamline University and professor of law at the University of Minnesota. He has taught classes on American government, public administration, and constitutional law for nearly 30 years. A three-time Fulbright scholar and winner of the Leslie A. Whittington national award for...
excellence in public affairs teaching, David Schultz is the author and editor of 35 books and 200 articles on American politics and law, including Presidential Swing States, and American Politics in the Age of Ignorance: Why Lawmakers Choose Belief Over Research.

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