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Debt Limit Legislation: The House “Gephardt Rule”

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Summary

Essentially all of the outstanding debt of the federal government is subject to a statutory limit, which is set forth as a dollar limitation in 31 U.S.C. 3101(b). From time to time, Congress considers and passes legislation to adjust or suspend this limit.

At the beginning of the 116th Congress, the House adopted a standing rule that would provide for legislation suspending the statutory debt limit to be considered as passed by the House, without a separate vote, when the House adopts the budget resolution for a fiscal year. This House rule is similar to a previous one related to the debt limit (commonly referred to as the "Gephardt rule," named after its original sponsor, former Representative Richard Gephardt), which was first adopted in 1979 but was repealed at the beginning of the 112th Congress in 2011.

The House may also consider debt limit legislation without resorting to the new debt limit rule (and also did so under the former Gephardt rule) either as freestanding legislation, as part of another measure, or as part of a budget reconciliation bill. The Senate does not have (and has never had) a comparable procedure. If it chooses under the new rule to consider such debt-limit legislation, it would do so under its regular legislative process.

This report first explains the current House debt limit rule, particularly in relation to the former Gephardt rule. Then, it describes the legislative history of the former rule and reviews how the former rule operated before it was repealed at the beginning of the 112th Congress.

Under the former Gephardt rule, in 11 of the 31 years between 1980 and 2010, the rule was either suspended (1988, 1990-1991, 1994-1997, and 1999-2000) or repealed (2001-2002) by the House. In most years in which the rule was suspended, legislation changing the statutory limit was not necessary—that is, at the time, the existing public debt limit was expected to be sufficient.

During the years in which the rule applied (i.e., in the 20 of the 31 years between 1980 and 2010), the rule led to the automatic engrossment of 20 House joint resolutions increasing the statutory limit on the public debt. In effect, under the rule, in these cases, the House was able to initiate legislation increasing the level of the public debt limit without a separate, direct vote on the legislation. Of these 20 joint resolutions, 15 became law. In 10 of these 15 cases, the Senate passed the measure without change, allowing it to be sent to the President for his signature without any further action by the House. In the remaining five cases, the Senate amended the rule-initiated legislation, requiring the House to vote on the amended legislation before it could be sent to the President.

During this period, the House also originated and considered debt limit legislation without resorting to the Gephardt rule either as freestanding legislation, as part of another measure, or as part of a budget reconciliation bill. Of the 47 public debt limit changes enacted into law during the period 1980-2010, 32 were enacted without resorting to the Gephardt rule, each requiring the House to vote on such legislation.

In total, between 1980 and 2010, the rule effectively allowed the House to avoid a separate, direct vote on 10 of the 47 measures changing the debt limit that were ultimately enacted into law.

This report updates the previous one (dated July 27, 2015) with a description of the changes to the former rule.

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Introduction

Essentially all of the outstanding debt of the federal government is subject to a statutory limit, which is set forth as a dollar limitation in 31 U.S.C. 3101(b). From time to time, Congress considers and passes legislation to adjust or suspend this limit.¹ Legislation adjusting the debt limit takes the form of an amendment to 31 U.S.C. 3101(b), usually striking the current dollar limitation and inserting a new one. In recent years, such legislation has taken the form of suspending the debt limit through a date certain with an increase to the dollar limit made administratively at the end of the suspension period.²

At the beginning of the 116th Congress, the House adopted a standing rule that would provide for legislation suspending the statutory debt limit to be considered as passed by the House, without a separate vote, when the House adopts the budget resolution for a fiscal year. This House rule is similar to a previous one related to the debt limit (commonly referred to as the "Gephardt rule," named after its original sponsor, former Representative Richard Gephardt), which was first adopted in 1979 but was repealed at the beginning of the 112th Congress in 2011.

The House may also consider debt limit legislation without resorting to the new debt limit rule (and also did so under the former Gephardt rule) either as freestanding legislation, as part of another measure, or as part of a budget reconciliation bill.³ The Senate does not have (and has never had) a comparable procedure. If it chooses under the new rule to consider such debt limit legislation, it would do so under its regular legislative process.

This report first explains the current House debt limit rule, particularly in relation to the former Gephardt rule. Then, it describes the legislative history of the former rule and reviews how the former rule operated before it was repealed at the beginning of the 112th Congress.

Features of the House Debt Limit Rule

House Rule XXVIII requires that the House clerk, when the House adopts the budget resolution for a fiscal year, automatically engross and transmit to the Senate a joint resolution suspending the public debt limit through the end of that year.⁴ In other words, such legislation suspending the debt limit would be passed by the House without a separate vote on the debt limit legislation. Instead of a separate vote, the rule stipulates that the vote on the budget resolution is to be considered as the vote on the debt legislation.

The new House debt limit rule differs from the former rule in two respects. First, under the new rule, the debt limit legislation is passed and sent to the Senate when the House adopts the budget resolution, not when the House and Senate agree to the budget resolution. Second, the debt legislation would suspend the debt limit, not explicitly set a new debt limit. Under the former rule, the debt limit legislation would provide for a specific new debt limit, indicating the amount by which the debt limit would be increased. In contrast, as a suspension of the debt limit, the new rule would provide for legislation that accommodates the variability of federal collections and

¹ For more information on the debt limit, see CRS Report RL31967, *The Debt Limit: History and Recent Increases*.

² See, for example, the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 (H.R. 1892), which included a provision (Title III of Div. C) to suspend the debt limit through March 1, 2019 (P.L. 115-123, enacted on February 9, 2018).

³ For more information on these alternative procedures, see CRS Report RS21519, *Legislative Procedures for Adjusting the Public Debt Limit: A Brief Overview*.

⁴ The rule would also be triggered by a revision to the budget resolution under Section 304 of the Budget Act (codified at 2 U.S.C. 635).

past obligations but retain the ability of Congress to revisit the effects of such revenues and existing obligations.

The current rule, as well as the former rule, does not affect the House Ways and Means Committee's exclusive jurisdiction over debt limit legislation.⁵

The full text of the current debt limit rule is provided in the **Appendix**.

Legislative History of the Gephardt Rule

The Gephardt rule, initially codified as Rule XLIX of the Standing Rules of the House of Representatives, was established by P.L. 96-78 (93 Stat. 589-591), an act to provide for a temporary increase in the public debt limit. The House adopted the legislation (H.R. 5369) by a vote of 219-198 on September 26, 1979.⁶

During consideration of the measure, Representative Gephardt explained that the purpose of the new House rule was to place the consideration of the public debt limit within the context of the overall budget policies contained in the annual budget resolution. In addition, it was intended to reduce the amount of time spent and the number of votes in the House and in committees on the issue of raising the public debt limit.

One of the aggregate amounts required to be included in the annual budget resolution is the appropriate level of the public debt.⁷ The budget resolution, however, does not become law. Therefore, the enactment of subsequent legislation is necessary in order to change the statutory limit on the public debt. The Gephardt rule enables the House to combine the finalization of the budget resolution and the origination of debt limit legislation into a single step.

Representative Gephardt stated that the new automatic engrossment process

puts the consideration of the appropriate level for the debt ceiling where it legitimately and logically belongs. That is in the context of when we vote for the spending that creates the need to change the debt ceiling.⁸

In its original form, the rule required the engrossment of a joint resolution changing the temporary public debt limit. In 1983, the separate temporary and permanent statutory limits on the public debt were combined into one permanent statutory limit (P.L. 98-34). Subsequently, the House amended the Gephardt rule to reflect this change by agreeing to H.Res. 241 (98th Congress) by voice vote on June 23, 1983.⁹ Under the modified rule, the automatically engrossed joint resolution would contain a change to the permanent statutory limit. In addition to this modification, the rules change

also provided that where a budget resolution contains more than one public debt limit figure (for the current and the next fiscal year), only one joint resolution be engrossed, containing

⁵ In the Senate, the Finance Committee has exclusive jurisdiction over debt limit legislation.

⁶ For the consideration in the House, see *Congressional Record*, vol. 125 (September 26, 1979), pp. 26337-26350. The Senate passed H.R. 5369 by a vote of 49-29 on September 28, 1979. For the consideration in the Senate, see *Congressional Record*, vol. 125 (September 28, 1979), pp. 26669-26691. The President signed the legislation into law on September 29, 1979.

⁷ As the budget resolution has evolved over time from a single-year time frame to a multi-year time frame, the budget resolution has gone from including a debt limit level for only one fiscal year to including debt limit levels for each fiscal year over a multi-year period.

⁸ *Congressional Record*, vol. 125 (September 26, 1979), p. 26342.

⁹ See *Congressional Record*, vol. 129 (June 23, 1983), pp. 17162-17164.

the debt limit figure for the current fiscal year with a time limitation, and the debt limit figure for the following fiscal year as the permanent limit.¹⁰

During consideration of H.Res. 241, Representative Butler C. Derrick explained the limitation of a single joint resolution by stating:

The Committee on Rules ... believes that it is unnecessary and confusing to have ... a single concurrent resolution on the budget trigger the engrossment and passage of two separate joint resolutions to increase or decrease the public debt [limit].¹¹

At the beginning of the 106th Congress (1999-2000), the House recodified the rule as House Rule XXIII. Certain language was deleted and modified from the existing rule, but the revisions were intended to continue the automatic engrossment process "without substantive change."¹²

The House repealed the rule at the beginning of the 107th Congress (2001-2002).¹³ On the opening day of the 108th Congress (2003-2004), however, the House reinstated this automatic engrossing process as a new rule, Rule XXVII.¹⁴ The reinstated rule contained the same language as Rule XXIII of the 106th Congress.

The rule was redesignated (without change) as Rule XXVIII during the 110th Congress upon the enactment of the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007 (S. 1, P.L. 110-81, September 14, 2007, see Section 301(a)).

Finally, as noted above, the House repealed the previous rule at the beginning of the 112th Congress (2011-2012).¹⁵ More recently, the House restored and revised the rule at the beginning of the 116th Congress.¹⁶

Operation of the Gephardt Rule

Table 1 provides information on the joint resolutions changing the public debt limit that were engrossed and deemed passed by the House pursuant to the Gephardt rule during calendar years 1980-2010.

The rule, however, did not operate in all of these years. In 11 of the 31 years between 1980 and 2010, the rule was either suspended (1988, 1990-1991, 1994-1997, and 1999-2000) or repealed (2001-2002) by the House.¹⁷ In most cases, the House suspended the rule because legislation changing the statutory limit was not necessary. At the time, the existing public debt limit was

¹⁰ U.S. Congress, *Constitution, Jefferson's Manual, and Rules of the House of Representatives of the United States, One Hundred Tenth Congress*, 109th Cong., 2nd sess., H.Doc. 109-157 (Washington: GPO, 2007), p. 981.

¹¹ *Congressional Record*, vol. 129 (June 23, 1983), p. 17163.

¹² See *Congressional Record*, vol. 145 (January 6, 1999), pp. 206-208; or U.S. Congress, House Committee on Rules, *The Recodification of the Rules of the House of Representatives*, committee print, 106th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington: GPO, 1999), pp. 172-174.

¹³ Section 2(s)(1) of H.Res. 5, adopted on January 3, 2001. See *Congressional Record*, vol. 147 (January 3, 2001), pp. 24-37.

¹⁴ Section 2(t) of H.Res. 5, adopted on January 7, 2003. See *Congressional Record*, vol. 149 (January 7, 2003), pp. 7-21.

¹⁵ Section 2(d)(2) of H.Res. 5, adopted on January 5, 2011. See *Congressional Record*, vol. 157, part 1 (January 5, 2011), pp. 80-102.

¹⁶ See Section 102(jj) of H.Res. 6, adopted on January 3, 2019. See *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 165 (January 3, 2019), pp. H17-H32.

¹⁷ For each of these cases, a brief explanation regarding the rule's suspension is provided in the notes at the end of **Table 1**.

expected to be sufficient. In three cases, the House passed or was expected to pass separate legislation to increase the statutory limit. As noted above, the rule was repealed at the beginning of the 107th Congress and therefore did not apply in 2001 and 2002.

During the remaining 20 years, when the rule was in effect, the House originated 20 joint resolutions under this procedure. The first seven of these 20 joint resolutions were generated under the Gephardt rule in its original form. As mentioned above, the rule was modified in 1983. It generally remained in this form through 2010. The subsequent 13 joint resolutions were generated under this modified language. In four years (calendar years 1998, 2004, 2006, and 2010), while the rule was in effect, the House and Senate did not agree to a conference report on the budget resolution, and therefore the automatic engrossment process under the Gephardt rule was not used.¹⁸

As **Table 1** shows, although budget resolutions adopted during this period contained debt limit amounts for between three and 11 different fiscal years—as the time frame of each budget resolution dictated—the joint resolutions automatically engrossed under the Gephardt rule contained debt limit amounts for only one or two fiscal years, depending on the requirements of the rule at the time. The 1983 modification, as noted above, provided that the automatically engrossed joint resolution could include multiple debt limit increases—one temporary and another permanent. The first three of the 11 joint resolutions automatically engrossed pursuant to this modified version of the rule contained two different public debt limits, and the other eight contained a single public debt limit.

The Senate passed 16 of the 20 joint resolutions automatically engrossed pursuant to the Gephardt rule, passing 10 without amendment and six with amendments. The 10 joint resolutions passed without amendment were sent to the President and signed into law. The six joint resolutions amended by the Senate required a vote of the House before being sent to the President. Five of these ultimately became law.¹⁹ Of the remaining four joint resolutions, the Senate began consideration on one but came to no resolution on it, and it took no action on three.

Between 1980 and 2010, a total of 47 public debt limit changes were signed into law as independent measures or as part of other legislation.²⁰ The Gephardt rule originated less than a third of these changes. That is, over two-thirds of the 47 public debt limit changes enacted into law during this period originated by procedures other than the House rule, each requiring the House to vote on such legislation. However, the rule effectively allowed the House to avoid a separate, direct vote on 10 (or 21%) of the 47 measures changing the debt limit that were ultimately enacted into law.

¹⁸ The House and Senate also did not agree to a conference report on the budget resolution in 2002, but the rule had been repealed at the beginning of the 107th Congress.

¹⁹ That is, only one of the 16 joint resolutions passed by the Senate did not become law. During the 99th Congress, the Senate passed, as amended, the joint resolution automatically engrossed by the House (H.J.Res. 668) and requested a conference with the House, but no further action was taken (as indicated in **Table 1**).

²⁰ For a listing of the 47 changes between 1980 and 2010, see Table 7.3 in Office of Management and Budget, *Historical Tables, Budget of the U.S. Government, Fiscal Year 2013* (Washington: GPO, 2012), pp. 136-139.

Table I. House Joint Resolutions Increasing the Public Debt Limit Automatically Engrossed Pursuant to the Gephardt Rule, 1980-2010

Budget Resolution		Debt Limit Resolution				
Congress	Fiscal Year and Resolution Number	Number of Public Debt Amounts Specified	Joint Resolution Number	Number of Public Debt Amounts Set Forth	Senate Initial Disposition (Date of Action)	Final Disposition (Date of Action)
96 th	FY1981 (first) H.Con.Res. 307	3	H.J.Res. 569	1	Passed without amendment (06-26-1980)	P.L. 96-286 (06-28-1980)
			H.J.Res. 570	1	Passed without amendment (12-12-1980)	P.L. 96-556 (12-19-1980)
	FY1981 (second) H.Con.Res. 448	3	H.J.Res. 636	1	Laid aside (12-12-1980)	—
97 th	FY1982 H.Con.Res. 115	3	H.J.Res. 265	1	Passed without amendment (09-29-1981)	P.L. 97-49 (09-30-1981)
			H.J.Res. 266	1	Passed without amendment (09-29-1981)	P.L. 97-48 (09-30-1981)
	FY1983 S.Con.Res. 92	3	H.J.Res. 519	1	Passed without amendment (06-23-1982)	P.L. 97-204 (06-28-1982)
			H.J.Res. 520	1	Passed without amendment (09-23-1982)	P.L. 97-270 (09-30-1982)
98 th	FY1984 H.Con.Res. 91	4	H.J.Res. 308	2	Passed, amended (11-17-1983)	P.L. 98-161 (11-21-1983)
	FY1985 H.Con.Res. 280	4	H.J.Res. 654	2	Passed without amendment (10-12-1984)	P.L. 98-475 (10-13-1984)
99 th	FY1986 S.Con.Res. 32	4	H.J.Res. 372	2	Passed, amended (10-10-1985)	P.L. 99-177 (12-12-1985)

Budget Resolution		Debt Limit Resolution				
Congress	Fiscal Year and Resolution Number	Number of Public Debt Amounts Specified	Joint Resolution Number	Number of Public Debt Amounts Set Forth	Senate Initial Disposition (Date of Action)	Final Disposition (Date of Action)
	FY1987 S.Con.Res. 120	3	H.J.Res. 668	1	Passed, amended (08-09-1986)	Senate requested conference (08-09-1986) and no further action was taken
100 th	FY1988 H.Con.Res. 93	3	H.J.Res. 324	1	Passed, amended (07-31-1987)	P.L. 100-119 (09-29-1987)
	FY1989 H.Con.Res. 268a	3	—	—	—	—
101 st	FY1990 H.Con.Res. 106	3	H.J.Res. 280	1	Passed, amended (11-07-1989)	P.L. 101-140 (11-08-1989)
	FY1991 H.Con.Res. 310b	5	—	—	—	—
102 nd	FY1992 H.Con.Res. 121c	6	—	—	—	—
	FY1993 H.Con.Res. 287	5	H.J.Res. 494	1	No action taken	—
103 rd	FY1994 H.Con.Res. 64	5	H.J.Res. 174	1	No action taken	—
	FY1995 H.Con.Res. 218d	5	—	—	—	—
104 th	FY1996 H.Con.Res. 67e	7	—	—	—	—
	FY1997 H.Con.Res. 178f	6	—	—	—	—

Budget Resolution		Debt Limit Resolution				
Congress	Fiscal Year and Resolution Number	Number of Public Debt Amounts Specified	Joint Resolution Number	Number of Public Debt Amounts Set Forth	Senate Initial Disposition (Date of Action)	Final Disposition (Date of Action)
105 th	FY1998 H.Con.Res. 84g	5	—	—	—	—
	FY1999 H.Con.Res. 284h	6	—	—	—	—
106 th	FY2000 H.Con.Res. 68i	10	—	—	—	—
	FY2001 H.Con.Res. 290j	6	—	—	—	—
107 th	FY2002 H.Con.Res. 83k	11	—	—	—	—
	FY2003 H.Con.Res. 353k	5	—	—	—	—
108 th	FY2004 H.Con.Res. 95	11	H.J.Res. 51	1	Passed without amendment (05-23-2003)	P.L. 108-24 (05-27-2003)
	FY2005 S.Con.Res. 95I	5	—	—	—	—
109 th	FY2006 H.Con.Res. 95	6	H.J.Res. 47	1	Passed without amendment (03-16-2006)	P.L. 109-182 (03-20-2006)
	FY2007 H.Con.Res. 376m	5	—	—	—	—
110 th	FY2008 S.Con.Res. 21	6	H.J.Res. 43	1	Passed without amendment (09-27-2007)	P.L. 110-91 (09-29-2007)

Budget Resolution		Debt Limit Resolution				
Congress	Fiscal Year and Resolution Number	Number of Public Debt Amounts Specified	Joint Resolution Number	Number of Public Debt Amounts Set Forth	Senate Initial Disposition (Date of Action)	Final Disposition (Date of Action)
	FY2009 S.Con.Res. 70	6	H.J.Res. 92	1	No action taken	—
111 th	FY2010 S.Con.Res. 13	6	H.J.Res. 45	1	Passed with amendment (01-28-2010)	P.L. 111-139 (02-12-2010)
	FY2011 —	—	—	—	—	—

Sources: Legislative Information System (LIS) and the *Congressional Record*, various years.

Notes: The Gephardt rule provided for the automatic engrossment of a House joint resolution increasing the public debt limit once Congress agreed to the conference report on a budget resolution. Initially, the rule was codified as House Rule XLIX. The rule was recodified as House Rule XXIII at the beginning of the 106th Congress (1999-2000) and was subsequently repealed at the beginning of the 107th Congress (2001-2002). The rule was restored as a new rule, Rule XXVII, by H.Res. 5 at the beginning of the 108th Congress (2003-2004). The rule was redesignated as Rule XXVIII during the 110th Congress (2007-2008) upon the enactment of the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007 (S. 1, P.L. 110-81, September 14, 2007). The rule was repealed at the beginning of the 112th Congress (2011-2012).

- a. Pursuant to Section 3 of H.Res. 461, the rule was suspended because there was no need to increase the public debt limit. See comments by Representative Butler C. Derrick in *Congressional Record*, vol. 134 (May 26, 1988), p. 12529.
- b. Pursuant to Section 5 of H.Res. 496, the rule was suspended with respect to “any conference report” to H.Con.Res. 310. Previously, Section 4 of H.Res. 488 suspended the rule with respect to the first conference report (H.Rept. 101-802) to H.Con.Res. 310. The House, however, rejected the first conference report. During the consideration of the first special rule, Representative Derrick indicated that originating new public debt legislation was not necessary because the House had previously passed and sent to the Senate legislation (H.R. 5355) providing for a long-term increase in the public debt limit. See *Congressional Record*, vol. 136 (October 4, 1990), p. 27590.
- c. Pursuant to Section 2 of H.Res. 157, the rule was suspended because the previous year’s reconciliation act (P.L. 101-508) provided a sufficient increase. See comments by Representative Derrick in *Congressional Record*, vol. 137 (May 22, 1991), p. 11856.
- d. Pursuant to Section 2 of H.Res. 418, the rule was suspended because at the time the current public debt limit was expected to be sufficient until spring or summer 1995. See comments by Representative Anthony C. Beilenson in *Congressional Record*, vol. 140 (May 5, 1994), pp. 9411-9412.
- e. Pursuant to Section 3 of H.Res. 149, the Gephardt rule was suspended because some Members wanted the House to vote separately on legislation increasing the public debt limit instead of an automatic engrossment of such legislation. See comments by Representative Gerald B. H. Solomon in *Congressional Record*, vol. 141 (May 17, 1995), pp. 13275-13276.

f.	Pursuant to Section 4 of H.Res. 435, the rule was suspended because at the time the current public debt limit was expected to be sufficient until at least October 1997. See comments by Representative Solomon in <i>Congressional Record</i> , vol. 142 (May 16, 1996), p. 11477.
g.	Pursuant to Section 3 of H.Res. 152, the rule was suspended because legislation increasing the public debt limit was contemplated by the balanced budget agreement with the White House in the context of reconciliation legislation. See comments by Representative Solomon in <i>Congressional Record</i> , vol. 143 (May 20, 1997), pp. 8904-8905.
h.	Pursuant to Section 2 of H.Res. 455, the rule was suspended presumably because at the time legislation increasing the public debt limit was not necessary due to expected future surpluses. The House and Senate, ultimately, did not complete action on the FY1999 budget resolution.
i.	Pursuant to Section 2 of H.Res. 131, the rule was suspended presumably because at the time legislation increasing the public debt limit was not necessary due to expected future surpluses.
j.	Pursuant to Section 2 of H.Res. 446, the rule was suspended presumably because at the time legislation increasing the public debt limit was not necessary due to expected future surpluses.
k.	The rule was repealed at the beginning of the 107 th Congress (2001-2002) by H.Res. 5, adopted on January 3, 2001.
l.	The House and Senate did not complete action on the FY2005 budget resolution, and therefore no joint resolution changing the public debt limit was automatically engrossed.
m.	The House and Senate did not complete action on the FY2007 budget resolution, and therefore no joint resolution changing the public debt limit was automatically engrossed.
n.	The House and Senate did not complete action on the FY2011 budget resolution, and therefore no joint resolution changing the public debt limit was automatically engrossed.

Appendix. Text of Current House Debt Limit Rule

RULE XXVIII

STATUTORY LIMIT ON THE PUBLIC DEBT

1. Upon adoption by the House of a concurrent resolution on the budget under section 301 or 304 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, the Clerk shall prepare an engrossment of a joint resolution suspending the statutory limit on the public debt in the form prescribed in clause 2. Upon engrossment of the joint resolution, the vote by which the concurrent resolution on the budget was adopted by the House shall also be considered as a vote on passage of the joint resolution in the House, and the joint resolution shall be considered as passed by the House and duly certified and examined. The engrossed copy shall be signed by the Clerk and transmitted to the Senate for further legislative action.
2. The matter after the resolving clause in a joint resolution described in clause 1 shall be as follows: ‘Section 3101(b) of title 31, United States Code, shall not apply for the period beginning on the date of enactment and ending on September 30, .’ with the blank being filled with the budget year for the concurrent resolution.
3. Nothing in this rule shall be construed as limiting or otherwise affecting—
 - (a) the power of the House or the Senate to consider and pass bills or joint resolutions, without regard to the procedures under clause 1, that would change the statutory limit on the public debt; or
 - (b) the rights of Members, Delegates, the Resident Commissioner, or committees with respect to the introduction, consideration, and reporting of such bills or joint resolutions.
4. In this rule the term ‘statutory limit on the public debt’ means the maximum face amount of obligations issued under authority of chapter 31 of title 31, United States Code, and obligations guaranteed as to principal and interest by the United States (except such guaranteed obligations as may be held by the Secretary of the Treasury), as determined under section 3101(b) of such title after the application of section 3101(a) of such title, that may be outstanding at any one time.

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