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The President's Fiscal Year 1999 Budget

Proposal Relies on Record Tax Levels to Balance Budget

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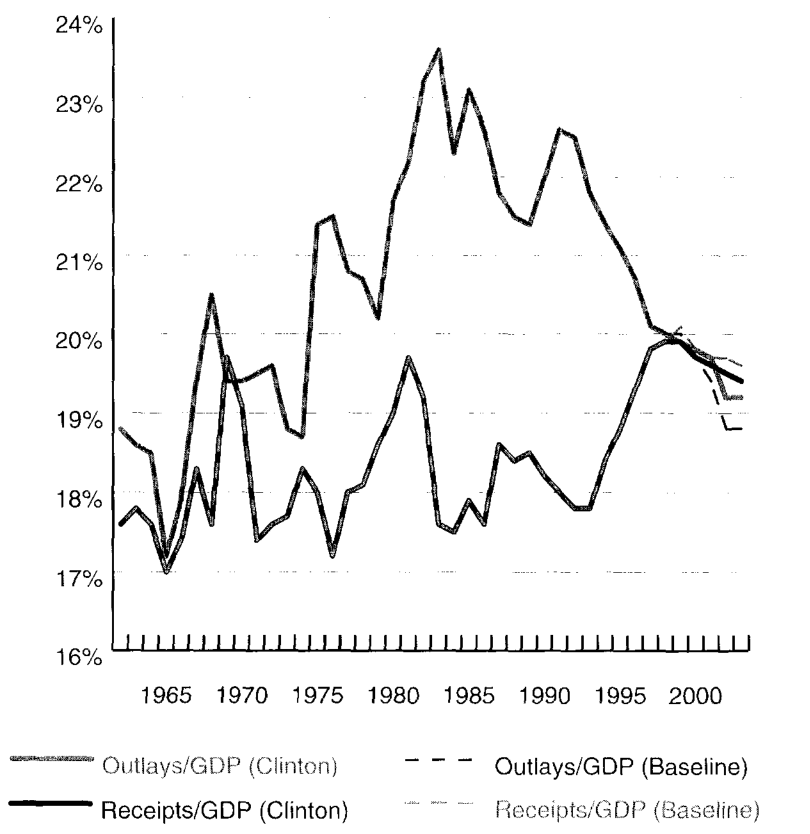
The Clinton Administration's newly proposed FY 1999 budget contains a plan that it claims will create a budget surplus of $9.5 billion in FY 1999 and generate additional surpluses in fiscal years 2000–2003. The Administration hopes to bring about these surpluses by slowing the growth of most types of federal spending over the next five years and raising a host of taxes and fees.

Figure 1
Federal Receipts and Outlays as a Percentage of GDP, FY 1962-2003
Clinton Budget Proposal v. OMB Current Services Baseline Estimates



Source: Tax Foundation, Office of Management and Budget.

While the Clinton proposal would hold the line on most types of federal spending it proposes several new spending initiatives. These include plans for increasing aid to education, expanding child-care subsidies, and increasing spending on medical research. The administration's proposal also contains several provisions which would affect federal entitlement spending. These include a proposal to use any surpluses to bolster the Social Security trust fund and a plan to expand Medicare coverage. It is unclear how the administration would accomplish its objective of bolstering the Social Security Trust Fund. In any case, doing so is likely have only a negligible impact on the long-term solvency of that fund. On the other hand, the administration's plan to expand Medicare coverage would likely exacerbate the nation's already serious long-term budget woes.

On the revenue side of the ledger the Clinton plan proposes raising taxes and fees by $81.5 billion over the next five years. The administration hopes to raise $65.5 billion of this sum through a deal with tobacco companies. The balance would come from raising other taxes and fees. The Clinton plan also assumes that tax dollars will continue to flow into federal coffers at record levels. So far during the 1990s, federal receipts have averaged 18.5 percent of GDP — much higher than the postwar average of 17.8 percent. The Clinton plan assumes that federal receipts will average 19.8 percent of GDP during fiscal years 1999–2003.

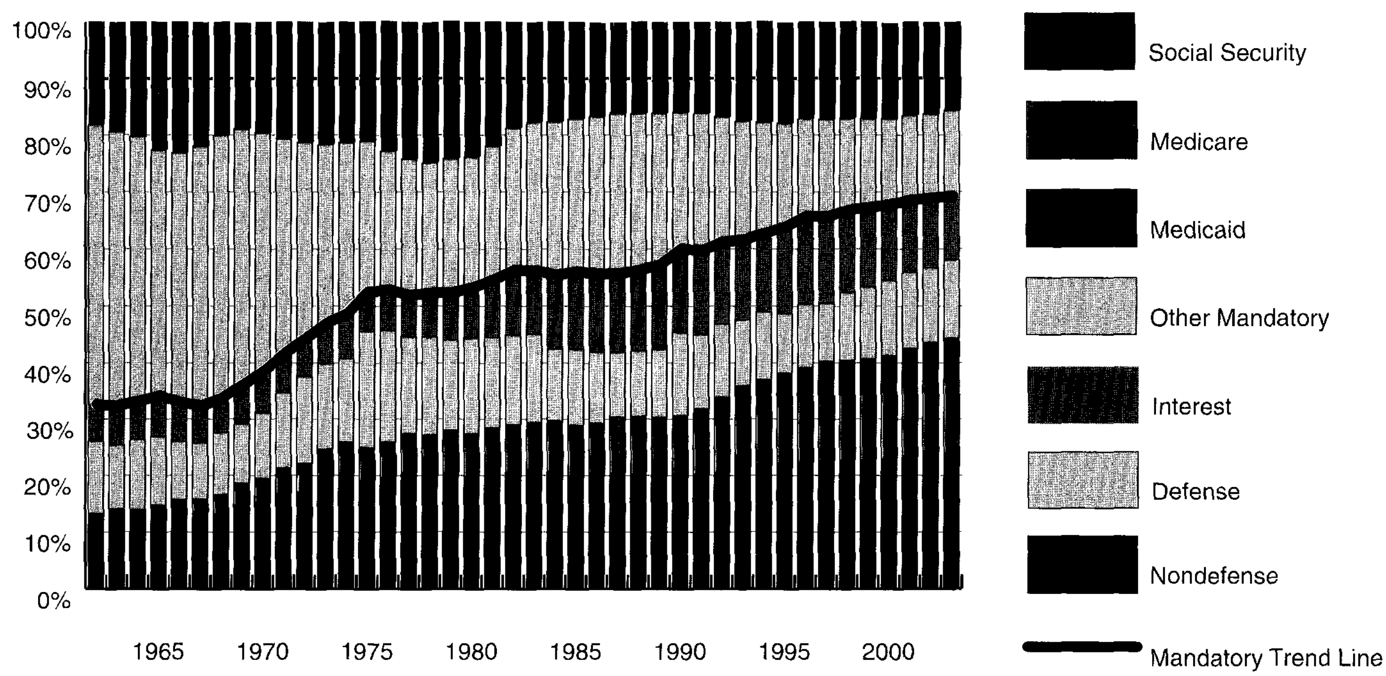
Figure 1 contrasts the Clinton budget proposal, illustrated by the solid lines for FY 1999–FY 2003, with what would occur if existing laws governing federal entitlement spending remained unchanged and if discretionary spending was allowed to grow with inflation. These baseline estimates are calculated by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and are represented by the dashed lines for fiscal years 1999-2003 in the figure. The graph also shows federal outlays and receipts as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) since 1962. Presenting federal outlays and receipts in this manner places them on a common scale and allows comparisons to be made over time. The deficit as a percentage of GDP is represented by the distance between these two lines. *Tables 1* and *3* present historical data on the budget. *Tables 2* and *4* provide data on the Clinton proposal as well as the OMB baseline estimates.

Under the Clinton plan federal outlays would be slightly higher during FY 1999 than they would be under current law. Under this plan outlays would total $1,733.2 billion, or 20.0 percent of GDP, during FY 1999. Under the OMB baseline such outlays would total $1,732.4. During the remaining four years of the plan outlays would be slightly less under the Clinton plan than they would be under current law. Under the Clinton plan federal outlays as a percent of GDP would fall from 19.7 percent in FY 2000 to 18.8 percent in FY 2003. Under the OMB baseline such outlays would fall from 19.8 percent in FY 2000 to 19.2 percent in FY 2003.

On the revenue side of the federal balance sheet, there is relatively little difference between what the plan proposes and what OMB projects will occur under current law. The Clinton budget projects that federal revenues will total $1,742.7 billion, or 20.1 percent of GDP, during FY 1999. Under current law federal receipts are expected to total $1,729.8 billion. During the remaining four years of the Clinton plan federal receipts are expected to average 19.7 percent of GDP. Under the OMB baseline federal receipts are expected to average 19.5 percent of GDP.

It is worth noting that both the Clinton plan and OMB baseline projections assume that revenue will continue to flow into federal coffers at record levels. The Clinton proposal assumes that the federal government will claim an average of 19.8 percent of GDP during fiscal years 1999-2003. The OMB baseline assumes that this figure will be slightly smaller at

Figure 2
Federal Outlays by Type, Fiscal Years 1962-2003



Source: Tax Foundation, Office of Management and Budget.

Table 1
Federal Outlays by Type ($Billions), Fiscal Years 1962 - 1998

		Discretionary			Mandatory						
	Total Outlays	Total	Defense	Non-Defense	Total	Social Security	Medicare	Medicaid	Other	Net Interest	Memo: GDP
1962	$106.9	$72.1	$52.6	$19.5	$27.9	$14.0	$0.0	$0.1	$13.8	$6.9	$567.5
1963	111.2	75.2	53.7	21.5	28.3	15.5	0.0	0.2	12.6	7.7	598.3
1964	118.5	79.1	55.0	24.1	31.2	16.2	0.0	0.2	14.8	8.2	640.0
1965	118.2	77.8	51.0	26.8	31.8	17.1	0.0	0.3	14.4	8.6	686.7
1966	134.6	90.2	59.0	31.2	35.0	20.3	0.0	0.8	13.9	9.4	752.8
1967	157.4	106.4	72.0	34.4	40.7	21.3	2.5	1.2	15.7	10.3	811.9
1968	178.2	118.0	82.2	35.8	49.1	23.3	4.4	1.8	19.6	11.1	868.1
1969	183.7	117.3	82.7	34.6	53.7	26.7	5.4	2.3	19.3	12.7	947.9
1970	195.7	120.2	81.9	38.3	61.1	29.6	5.8	2.7	22.9	14.4	1,009.0
1971	210.2	122.5	79.0	43.5	72.9	35.1	6.2	3.4	28.2	14.8	1,077.7
1972	230.7	128.4	79.3	49.1	86.8	39.4	7.0	4.6	35.8	15.5	1,176.9
1973	245.6	130.2	77.1	53.1	98.1	48.2	7.6	4.6	37.7	17.3	1,306.8
1974	269.2	138.0	80.7	57.3	109.8	55.0	9.0	5.8	40.0	21.4	1,438.1
1975	332.3	157.8	87.6	70.2	151.3	63.6	12.2	6.8	68.6	23.2	1,554.5
1976	371.8	175.3	89.9	85.4	169.8	72.7	15.0	8.6	73.5	26.7	1,730.4
1977	409.2	196.8	97.5	99.3	182.5	83.7	18.6	9.9	70.3	29.9	1,971.4
1978	458.7	218.4	104.6	113.8	204.8	92.4	21.8	10.7	79.9	35.5	2,212.6
1979	504.0	239.7	116.8	122.9	221.7	102.6	25.5	12.4	81.2	42.6	2,495.9
1980	590.9	276.1	134.6	141.5	262.3	117.1	31.0	14.0	100.2	52.5	2,718.9
1981	678.2	307.7	158.0	149.7	301.7	137.9	37.9	16.8	109.0	68.8	3,049.1
1982	745.7	325.8	185.9	139.9	334.9	153.9	45.3	17.4	118.3	85.0	3,211.3
1983	808.4	353.2	209.9	143.3	365.4	168.5	51.2	19.0	126.7	89.8	3,421.9
1984	851.8	379.2	228.0	151.2	361.5	176.1	56.0	20.1	109.3	111.1	3,812.0
1985	946.5	415.7	253.1	162.6	401.3	186.4	64.1	22.7	128.2	129.5	4,102.1
1986	990.4	438.3	273.8	164.5	416.1	196.5	68.4	25.0	126.2	136.0	4,374.3
1987	1,004.1	443.9	282.5	161.4	421.5	205.1	73.4	27.4	115.6	138.7	4,605.1
1988	1,064.4	464.1	290.9	173.2	448.5	216.8	76.9	30.5	124.3	151.8	4,953.5
1989	1,143.7	488.5	304.0	184.5	485.9	230.4	82.7	34.6	138.2	169.3	5,351.8
1990	1,253.2	500.3	300.1	200.2	568.7	246.5	95.8	41.1	185.3	184.2	5,684.5
1991	1,324.3	533.0	319.7	213.3	596.8	266.8	102.0	52.5	175.4	194.5	5,858.8
1992	1,381.7	534.1	302.6	231.5	648.2	285.2	116.2	67.8	179.0	199.4	6,143.2
1993	1,409.4	540.4	292.4	248.0	670.2	302.0	127.9	75.8	164.5	198.8	6,475.1
1994	1,461.8	543.3	282.3	261.0	715.5	316.9	141.8	82.0	174.7	203.0	6,845.7
1995	1,515.8	545.1	273.6	271.5	738.5	333.3	156.9	89.1	159.2	232.2	7,194.8
1996	1,560.5	533.8	266.0	267.8	785.6	347.1	171.3	92.0	175.2	241.1	7,529.8
1997	1,601.2	548.2	271.6	276.6	809.0	362.3	187.4	95.6	163.7	244.0	7,972.4
1998	1,667.7	552.6	265.1	287.5	872.4	378.1	195.4	101.0	198.0	242.7	8,348.0

Source: Tax Foundation, Office of Management and Budget.

19.6 percent. These projections exceed both recent and historical averages. So far during the 1990s federal receipts have averaged 18.5 percent of GDP. During the postwar period they have averaged 17.8 percent of GDP.

Federal Expenditures Under the Clinton Budget

The budget shares of the major categories of federal spending under the Clinton plan are illustrated in *Figure 2* by the stacked bar graphs for fiscal years 1999-2003. The graph also contains historical data for fiscal years 1962-1998.

In the graph, federal outlays are divided into two broad categories: discretionary and mandatory & net interest. Levels of spending for programs funded by discretionary outlays are determined by the annual appropriations process. Spending levels for programs funded by so-called mandatory outlays are determined by statutes other than appropriations acts. To alter levels of funding for these types of outlays, a program's authorizing legislation must be amended. The federal government incurs a legal obligation to make interest payments when it issues debt. Because Congress and the President can not regulate such expenditures through the annual appropriations process, such expenditures are combined with mandatory outlays in the *Figure 2*. These two broad categories of federal spending are then subdi-

Table 2
Federal Outlays by Type, President's Proposal and OMB Baselines, Fiscal Years 1999 - 2003

		Discretionary			Mandatory						
	Total Outlays	Total	Defense	Non-Defense	Total	Social Security	Medicare	Medicaid	Other	Net Interest	Memo: GDP
President's Proposal											
1999	$1,733.2	$566.2	$266.5	$299.7	$925.2	$392.9	$204.6	$107.7	$220.0	$241.8	$8,684.6
2000	1,785.1	573.9	269.7	304.2	974.7	409.3	214.2	114.8	236.4	236.5	9,047.3
2001	1,834.4	575.1	270.8	304.3	1025.7	427.1	229.9	123.4	245.3	233.6	9,440.4
2002	1,859.5	576.8	273.1	303.7	1055.6	447.0	232.2	132.6	243.8	227.1	9,880.4
2003	1,945.4	595.3	289.5	305.8	1129.5	467.5	253.1	143.1	265.8	220.6	10,336.3
OMB Baseline											
1999	$1,732.4	$569.4	$271.0	$298.4	$920.9	$392.8	$204.7	$107.9	$215.5	$242.1	$8,684.6
2000	1,794.4	585.2	278.4	306.8	971.5	409.2	214.2	114.9	233.2	237.7	9,047.3
2001	1,855.4	599.8	285.7	314.1	1019.3	427.0	230.1	123.5	238.7	236.3	9,440.4
2002	1,898.1	614.0	292.8	321.2	1051.8	446.9	232.5	132.7	239.7	232.3	9,880.4
2003	1,985.8	631.2	301.7	329.5	1126.0	467.4	253.4	143.2	262.0	228.6	10,336.3

Source: Tax Foundation, Office of Management and Budget.

vided into their major components. Discretionary spending is divided into defense and non-defense outlays. Mandatory & net interest outlays are divided into outlays for Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, other mandatory programs, and net interest. The budget share of each of these subcategories are illustrated in the graph.

The thick line delineating the two types of spending in *Figure 2* illustrates how the composition of federal outlays has changed over the past three decades. Until the late 1960s, more than 70 percent of all federal spending was discretionary, controlled by the annual appropriations process. Following the implementation of several new entitlement programs in the late 1960s, the composition of federal outlays changed dramatically. Increasingly federal spending was comprised of mandatory & net interest outlays. For a time it was possible to partially finance the rapid growth of these types of expenditures by making offsetting reductions in defense spending. By the mid-1970s cuts in defense spending were no longer feasible. *Figure 1* shows that the budget deficit began to grow rapidly as federal outlays quickly increased as a percent of GDP. The deficit problem was exacerbated by the perceived need to increase defense expenditures during the 1980s. Since 1989, however, cuts in defense spending have once again cushioned the impact of the rapid growth of mandatory & net interest outlays and allowed the deficit to shrink relative to GDP.

Under current law the share of the budget dedicated to mandatory & net interest outlays would grow from 67.1 percent in FY 1999 to 68.2 percent in FY 2003. Because the Clinton plan would reduce the growth of discretionary outlays proportionally more than it would mandatory and net interest outlays, the share of overall federal expenditures dedicated to these types of outlays would rise from 67.3 percent in FY 1999 to 69.4 percent in FY 2003 under the Administration's proposal.

The data in *Table 2* shows that the Clinton plan makes no significant changes in any of the major categories of mandatory spending. Spending levels under the plan for Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid are essentially unchanged from baseline levels. The plan does, however, propose increasing funding levels for several minor mandatory spending programs. Among these are proposals to restore some welfare benefits for legal immigrants and increase aid to veterans. These and other proposals help to boost funding levels under the plan for the "Other" category in *Table 2* above baseline levels.

The shrinking deficit and low interest rates projected by the Clinton Administration would mean that federal outlays for net interest payments would grow more slowly under the Clinton plan than under current law. Under current law interest payments are projected to increase from $242.1 billion in FY 1999 to $228.6 billion in FY 2003. Under the Clinton plan such outlays are expected to increase from $241.8 billion in FY 1999 to $220.6 billion in FY 2003.

On the discretionary side of the budget, defense expenditures would grow much more slowly under the Clinton budget proposal than if such outlays were capped in real terms at levels equal to enacted FY 1998 appropria-

Table 3
Federal Receipts by Source ($Billions), Fiscal Years 1962 - 1998

	Total Receipts	Individual Income Taxes	Corporate Income Taxes	Social Insurance Taxes	Other
1962	$99.7	$45.6	$20.5	$17.0	$16.5
1963	106.6	47.6	21.6	19.8	17.6
1964	112.6	48.7	23.5	22.0	18.5
1965	116.8	48.8	25.5	22.2	20.3
1966	130.8	55.4	30.1	25.5	19.8
1967	148.8	61.5	34.0	32.6	20.7
1968	153.0	68.7	28.7	33.9	21.7
1969	186.9	87.2	36.7	39.0	23.9
1970	192.8	90.4	32.8	44.4	25.2
1971	187.1	86.2	26.8	47.3	26.8
1972	207.3	94.7	32.2	52.6	27.8
1973	230.8	103.2	36.2	63.1	28.3
1974	263.2	119.0	38.6	75.1	30.6
1975	279.1	122.4	40.6	84.5	31.5
1976	298.1	131.6	41.4	90.8	34.3
1977	355.6	157.6	54.9	106.5	36.6
1978	399.6	181.0	60.0	121.0	37.7
1979	463.3	217.8	65.7	138.9	40.8
1980	517.1	244.1	64.6	157.8	50.6
1981	599.3	285.9	61.1	182.7	69.5
1982	617.8	297.7	49.2	201.5	69.3
1983	600.6	288.9	37.0	209.0	65.6
1984	666.5	298.4	56.9	239.4	71.8
1985	734.1	334.5	61.3	265.2	73.1
1986	769.2	349.0	63.1	283.9	73.2
1987	854.4	392.6	83.9	303.3	74.6
1988	909.3	401.2	94.5	334.3	79.3
1989	991.2	445.7	103.3	359.4	82.8
1990	1,032.0	466.9	93.5	380.0	91.5
1991	1,055.0	467.8	98.1	396.0	93.1
1992	1,091.3	476.0	100.3	413.7	101.4
1993	1,154.4	509.7	117.5	428.3	98.9
1994	1,258.6	543.1	140.4	461.5	113.7
1995	1,351.8	590.2	157.0	484.5	120.1
1996	1,453.1	656.4	171.8	509.4	115.4
1997	1,579.3	737.5	182.3	539.4	120.2
1998	1,657.9	767.8	190.8	571.4	127.9

Source: Tax Foundation, Office of Management and Budget.

tions. In the later case, discretionary defense expenditures would grow from $271.0 billion in FY 1999 to $301.7 billion in FY 2003. Under the Clinton plan such expenditures would grow from $266.5 billion in FY 1999 to $289.5 billion in FY 2003.

Nondefense expenditures would also grow much more slowly under the Clinton proposal than if such expenditures were capped in real terms at FY 1998 appropriated levels. In the baseline case, nondiscretionary outlays would grow from $298.4 billion in FY 1999 to $329.5 billion in FY 2003. Under the Clinton plan nondefense discretionary expenditures would grow from $299.7 billion in FY 1999 to $305.8 billion in FY 2003.

Federal Revenues Under the Clinton Budget

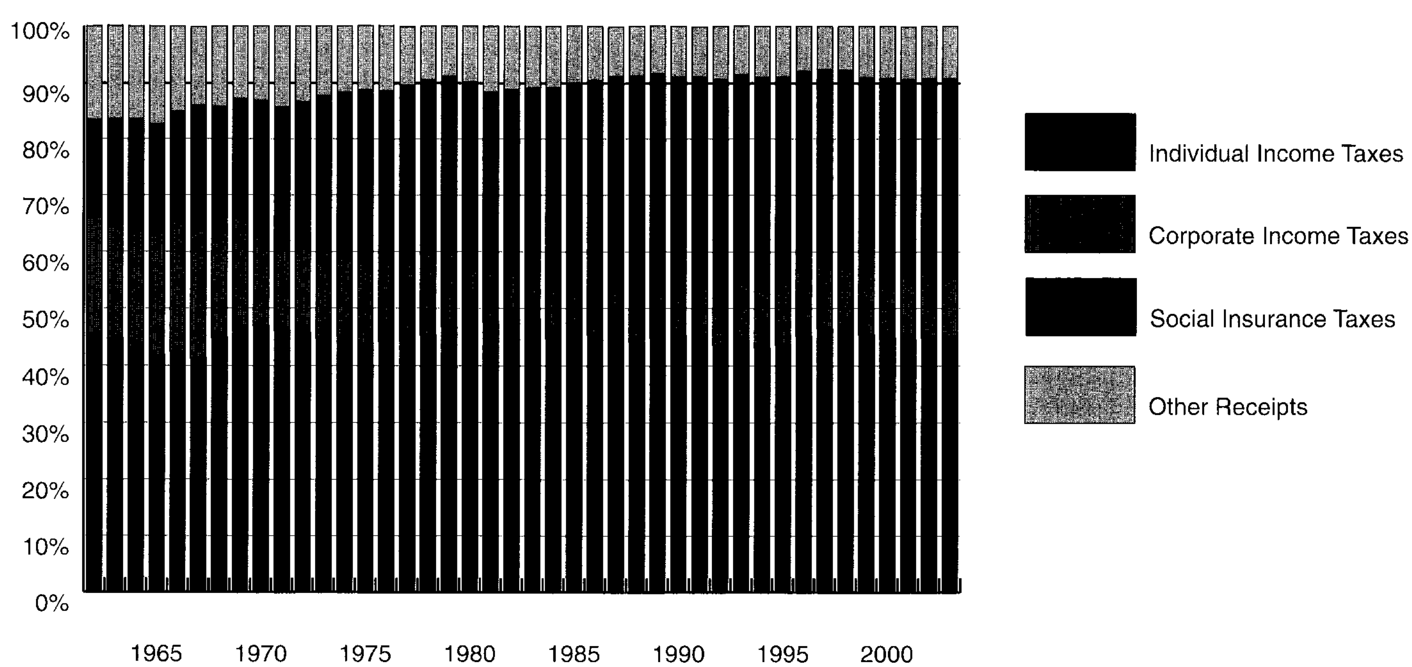
The Clinton budget contains a mix of proposals which would affect federal revenues over the next five years. Some provisions, such as the Administration's proposal to create a tax credit for employer provided child care, would cut the tax bills of some Americans slightly. Others, such as the tax increases associated with the proposed tobacco settlement, would increase tax bills. On whole, the Administration's proposal would boost federal revenues by $81.5 billion over the next five years. With these changes the Administration projects that revenues would fill federal coffers at record levels over the next five years

The major sources of federal revenue under the Clinton budget are listed in *Table 4* and are illustrated in *Figure 3* by the stacked bar graphs for fiscal years 1999 - 2003. The graph also contains historical data since 1962. It shows that individual income tax collections have been a relatively stable source of federal revenue over the past 36 years, averaging 45.1 percent of federal receipts. Under current law, federal revenue from individual income taxes is expected to rise from $792.7 billion in FY 1999 to $919.9 billion in FY 2003. Because the Clinton plan contains several proposals which would provide some individuals with income tax relief, revenue from this type of tax would be slightly lower under its plan. Under the proposal, individual income tax collections would grow from $791.5 billion in FY 1999 to $915.5 billion in FY 2003.

Federal corporate income tax receipts have fluctuated somewhat over the past 36 years. In 1962 such levies accounted for 20.6 percent of federal revenue. By 1966 this figure had grown to 23.0 percent. From 1966 to 1983 the share of federal revenue comprised of corporate income tax collections gradually declined. In 1983 the $37.0 billion collected by the corporate income tax accounted for just 6.2 percent of federal revenue. Since FY 1983, however, the importance of the corporate income tax as a source of federal revenue has rebounded somewhat. In FY 1997 the corporate income tax raised $182.3 billion, or 11.5 percent of federal revenue. Under current law, the corporate income tax is projected to raise $194.4 billion in revenue during FY 1999. By FY 2003 this figure is expected to rise to $217.4 billion. The Clinton budget contains a plethora of provisions which would raise corporate income taxes. Because of these, federal revenue from this type of tax is projected to total $198.0 billion in FY 1999 and then rise to $220.4 billion in FY 2002 under the plan.

The rapid growth in the share of federal outlays allocated to mandatory spending programs has been accompanied by a rapid growth of the taxes collected to pay for these programs. In 1962 just 17.1 percent of the federal government's revenue came from these types of taxes. By FY 1997, this figure grew to 34.2 percent. Under the Clinton budget proposal the federal government would collect

Figure 3
Federal Receipts by Source, Fiscal Years 1962-2003



Source: Tax Foundation, Office of Management and Budget.

Table 4
Federal Receipts by Source, President's Proposal and OMB Current Services Baseline, Fiscal Years 1999-2003
($Billions)

	Total Receipts	Individual Income Taxes	Corporate Income Taxes	Social Insurance Taxes	Other	Memo: Tobacco Settlement
President's Proposal						
1999	$1,742.7	$791.5	$198.0	$595.9	$157.4	$9.8
2000	1,793.6	804.6	202.9	623.0	163.0	11.8
2001	1,862.6	833.4	209.2	649.0	171.0	13.3
2002	1,949.3	877.1	214.7	677.8	179.8	14.5
2003	2,028.2	915.5	220.4	706.5	185.7	16.1
OMB Baseline						
1999	$1,729.8	$792.7	$194.4	$595.7	$147.0	$0.0
2000	1,778.9	808.5	200.4	622.8	147.2	0.0
2001	1,845.9	837.9	206.0	648.4	153.6	0.0
2002	1,930.8	881.5	211.7	677.1	160.5	0.0
2003	2,009.5	919.9	217.4	706.3	165.9	0.0

Source: Tax Foundation, Office of Management and Budget.

$595.9 billion in social insurance taxes during FY 1999. By FY 2003 the Administration predicts that these types of taxes will raise $706.5 billion under its plan. *Table 4* shows that these figures differ only slightly from what is projected to occur under current law.

The share of total federal revenue raised from other sources has declined over the past 36 years. Such revenue includes federal excise taxes, customs duties and fees, estate and gift taxes, and other miscellaneous taxes and fees. In 1962, these types of receipts made up 16.6 percent of federal revenue. By FY 1997 this figure declined to 7.6 percent. The OMB predicts that under current law the federal government will collect $147.0 billion in these types of receipts during FY 1999. By FY 2003, it predicts that this figure would climb to $165.9 billion. Under the Clinton plan the federal government would collect $157.4 billion in these types of receipts during FY 1999. By FY 2003, this figure would rise to $185.7 billion under the plan. Much of the difference between the baseline figures and the Clinton proposal stem from anticipated revenues from proposed tobacco legislation that is currently being debated in Congress. The Clinton plan assumes that a total of $65.4 billion will be forthcoming over five years from this yet unapproved deal.

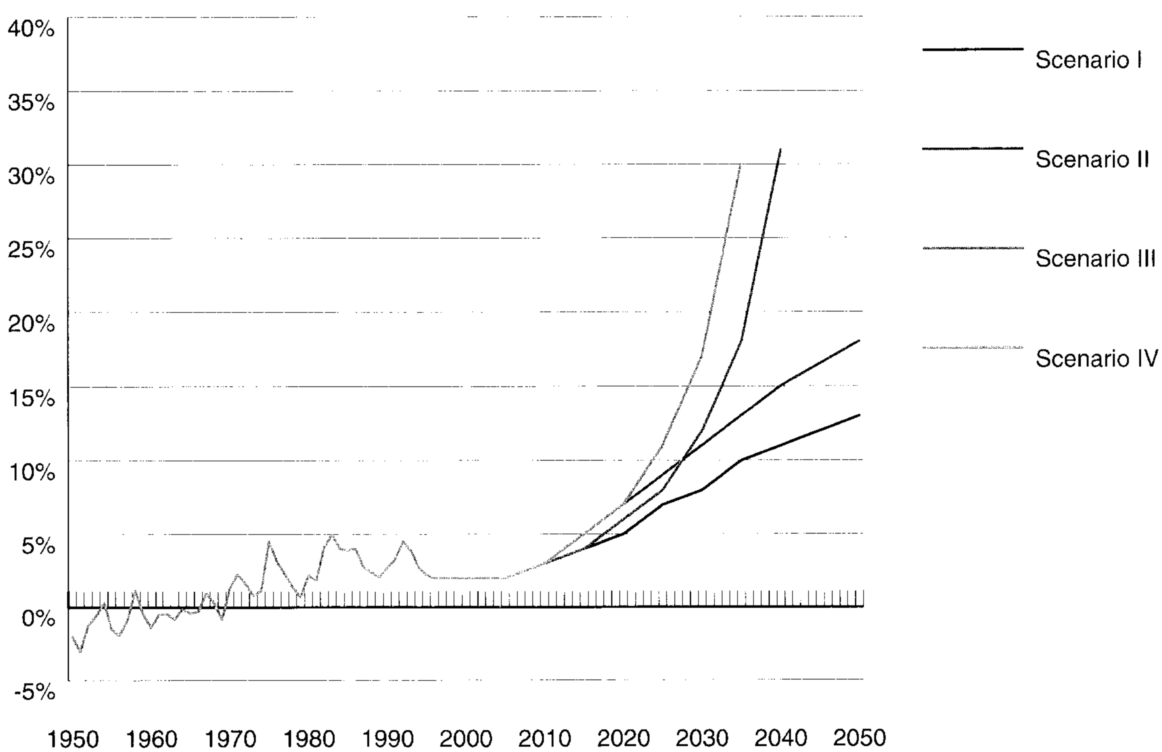
The Long Run Deficit Picture

While there are reasons to be optimistic about the short-run deficit forecast, the long-run outlook is potentially much more bleak. Late in the next decade the baby boom generation will begin to retire and become eligible for Social Security and Medicare. Under current law the demands that such individuals would place on the federal treasury are non-sustainable. Even under the most optimistic assumptions, if the federal government attempted to meet these demands it would have to raise taxes to unprecedented levels or go deeply into debt. In either case the economy would likely falter and the economic well-being of Americans could be forever jeopardized.

To gauge the effect of continued growth of entitlement spending on the federal budget and the economy, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has developed an economic model of the budget and the economy and used it examine four scenarios.* Each scenario assumes that federal receipts will be equal to 20 percent of GDP for the years 2000–2025. In the first two scenarios this would continue to be the case through 2050. In the latter two, federal receipts would eventually rise to 21 percent of GDP by 2035. All of the scenarios assume that budget shortfalls will be financed by the issuance of debt. In the first two scenarios the issuance of such debt is assumed to have no harmful effects on the economy. In

** The CBO's model uses definitions of federal expenditures and receipts which are based on those used in the Bureau of Economic Analysis's National Income and Product Accounts. These differ slightly from the budget concepts used elsewhere in this report.*

Figure 4
Federal Deficits as a Percentage of GDP Under Four CBO Scenarios, 1950–2050



Source: Tax Foundation, Congressional Budget Office.

the latter two there is assumed to be a fiscal penalty, in the form of higher interest rates, associated with the accumulation of such debt.

On the expenditure side of the budget mandatory and net interest outlays, in both the medium (1998–2007) and long run (2008–2050), are assumed to be determined by current law. Discretionary spending under the first and third scenarios are assumed to remain constant in real terms and grow only with inflation after 2007. In the second and fourth scenarios discretionary spending is assumed to grow with the economy after 2007.

Figure 4 illustrates what the model predicts would happen to the federal deficit in each of the four scenarios during the first half of the next century. In the first scenario the deficit grows from 3.0 percent of GDP in 2010 to 13.0 percent in 2050. Similarly, in the second scenario, the deficit grows from 3.0 percent of GDP in 2010 to 18.0 percent in 2050. In the two scenarios that assume there to be adverse economic affects associated with rapidly rising federal debt, the results are even more dramatic. In the third scenario the deficit rises from 3.0 percent of GDP in 2010 to 31.0 percent in 2040. The model does make projections after this debt since the nation's debt load would soon exceed levels that could reasonably by supported by the economy. In the fourth scenario the deficit as a percent of GDP rises from 3.0 percent in 2010 to 30.0 percent in 2035.

The Clinton budget contains two proposals which would affect on the nation's long-run fiscal problems. The first of these is its plan to use any budget surpluses to bolster the Social Security Trust Fund. While this plan would add some solvency to this fund its impact is likely to be negligible since any budget surpluses are likely to be small when compared to the projected shortfalls of the Social Security program. The Administration's plan to expand Medicare coverage would likely exacerbate the nation's long-term budget woes.