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Bill proposes 10 percent cut in federal workforce

By Ed O'Keefe

A Texas Republican congressman wants to cut the federal workforce by 10 percent in the next decade, impose a three-year pay freeze across federal agencies and Capitol Hill and trim government printing and vehicle costs.

Rep. **Kevin Brady's** bill, the Cut Unsustainable and Top-heavy Spending, or [CUTS Act](#), is the first detailed series of spending proposals introduced in the Republican-controlled House that target government operations and the federal workforce. Democrats and federal workers have long expected the GOP to target domestic spending programs and the federal workforce in an effort to trim the federal deficit.

Brady chairs the [Joint Economic Committee](#) and is a senior member of the [House Ways and Means Committee](#) -- perches likely to put him at the center of the Congress's forthcoming debate on government spending and deficits.

Both parties have pledged to tackle deficit concerns, but are expected to introduce dramatically different proposals. President Obama is set to unveil his 2012 budget proposals [in mid-February](#) and Republicans have promised to introduce deep spending cuts that they expect to be adopted now that more GOP lawmakers are serving on Capitol Hill.

Brady's bill would eliminate about \$150 billion in federal spending over five years by adopting a series of spending cuts proposed by either the [Bipartisan Deficit Commission](#), Obama or former president **George W. Bush**.

The commission, [co-chaired](#) by former Clinton White House chief of staff **Erskine Bowles** and former Sen. **Alan Simpson** (R-Wyo.), [proposed](#) eliminating about 200,000 federal jobs -- including civilian Pentagon positions -- over the next decade, resulting in about \$13.2 billion in savings. Brady's bill includes the proposal, but does not specify which jobs to eliminate. The government would hire two new workers for every three who leave service, according to Brady's office.

"Washington needs to learn to do more with less, using fewer resources to accomplish existing goals without risking a decline in essential government services," Brady said in a statement. His office did not immediately return requests for an interview. (If we hear from Brady we'll add his comments here.)

The bill also calls for a three-year pay freeze for lawmakers and executive branch employees, including Defense Department workers, saving about \$26 billion over five years. The commission endorsed the pay freeze as part of its proposals. Obama has already ordered a [two-year federal worker pay freeze](#), a move [blasted by federal employee unions](#) as detrimental to government recruitment and retention efforts.

Brady wants 15 percent cuts in White House and Congressional budgets totaling \$3.8 billion in savings over five years, a \$2 billion cut in government printing costs and a \$1.5 billion reduction in federal vehicle costs -- ideas endorsed by the commission.

Brady's bill also adopts the commission's proposal to eliminate \$400 million in annual funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, which distributes money to the [Public Broadcasting Service](#) and [National Public Radio](#). Republican-backed legislation to end CPB funding, drafted in the wake of [NPR's decision to fire](#) commentator **Juan Williams** for comments he made about potential terrorists, failed during last year's lame-duck session.

The legislation also targets smaller cuts introduced in budgets introduced by Obama or Bush, including the elimination of some resource development and conservation programs, surface transportation funding and legal assistance payments by the Education Department. It merges several Republican-backed proposals that failed to advance when the GOP was in the minority. Several spending cuts were introduced as part of a [Republican online voting contest](#) started by then-House Minority Whip **Eric Cantor** (R-Va.) that asked supporters to rank proposed legislation.

Cantor, who now serves as House Majority Leader, is "looking at every idea to lower spending and generate savings for the taxpayer," said his spokesman, **Brad Dayspring**.

Colleen M. Kelley, president of the [National Treasury Employees Union](#), said Brady's bill would undermine federal workers and ignores the fiscal commission's ideas on cutting government contractors.

"The proposals would leave federal agencies understaffed and underfunded, which has serious consequences to the American public," Kelley said, repeating a line of argument echoed by many supporters of the federal workforce. NTEU represents about 150,000 federal workers.

Chris Edwards, a budget analyst with the [Cato Institute](#), credited Brady with introducing specific ideas after a midterm campaign season short on detailed spending proposals. But the bill "only nibbles around the edges" by saving just \$43 billion annually, or 3 percent of the federal deficit, Edwards said. The government could save more money by cutting business and farming subsidies and revamping Medicare and Medicaid payments, he said.

"I recognize that these are serious savings so I expect serious opposition - but there can be no sacred cows," Brady said. He called on lawmakers opposed to elements of his bill

to introduce other savings proposals of equal or greater value. "We simply can't allow these dangerous deficits to continue," he said.