

Texas Republican wants to cut federal workforce by 10 percent

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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 (CUTS) Act, is the first detailed series of spending proposals introduced in the GOP-controlled House that targets government operations and the federal workforce. Democrats and federal employee unions have long expected the GOP to target domestic spending programs and the 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 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](#).

Adopting many proposals introduced by Obama's bipartisan fiscal commission, Brady's bill would eliminate about \$150 billion in federal spending over five years by, among other things, cutting 200,000 federal jobs - including civilian Pentagon positions - through attrition over the next decade. The cuts would occur by replacing every three workers who leave the government with two new hires, Brady said Tuesday.

"There's not a business in America that's survived this recession without right-sizing its workforce, without having to become more productive with fewer workers. The federal government can't be the exception," Brady said. "We're going to have to find a way to serve our constituents and our taxpayers better and quicker and more accurately with fewer workers. I'm convinced we can do it and we don't have a choice."

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, who is also considering fiscal commission proposals as part of his forthcoming budget, has already ordered a [two-year federal worker pay freeze](#). [Federal-employee unions](#) consider the move detrimental to government recruitment and retention efforts.

Brady also wants 15 percent cuts in White House and congressional budgets, which would total \$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 backed by the commission.

Borrowing from spending cuts pushed by Obama and former president George W. Bush, Brady would eliminate some resource development and conservation programs, surface transportation funding and legal-assistance payments by the Education Department.

Several Republican-backed spending proposals failed to advance last year as part of a [Republican online voting contest](#) started by then-House Minority Whip Eric Cantor (R-Va.).

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.

Brady, who credited the commission for most of the proposals in his bill, said it likely will be included as part of formal Republican budget proposals coming soon.

Colleen M. Kelley, president of the National Treasury Employees Union, said the bill "would leave federal agencies understaffed and underfunded, which has serious consequences to the American public." The NTEU represents about 150,000 federal workers.

Chris Edwards, a budget analyst with the Cato Institute, said the bill "only nibbles around the edges" by saving just \$43 billion annually, or 3 percent of the federal deficit. The government could save more money by cutting billions of dollars in business and farming subsidies, and Medicare and Medicaid payments, he said.

The bill also doesn't propose cutting any of the approximately \$140 billion annual costs tied to health insurance and retirement benefits for current and former federal workers. Union leaders and other observers have warned that significant changes to federal benefits would drive many eligible workers to retire, potentially draining agencies of senior, experienced career officials.

Staff writer Eric Yoder contributed to this report.