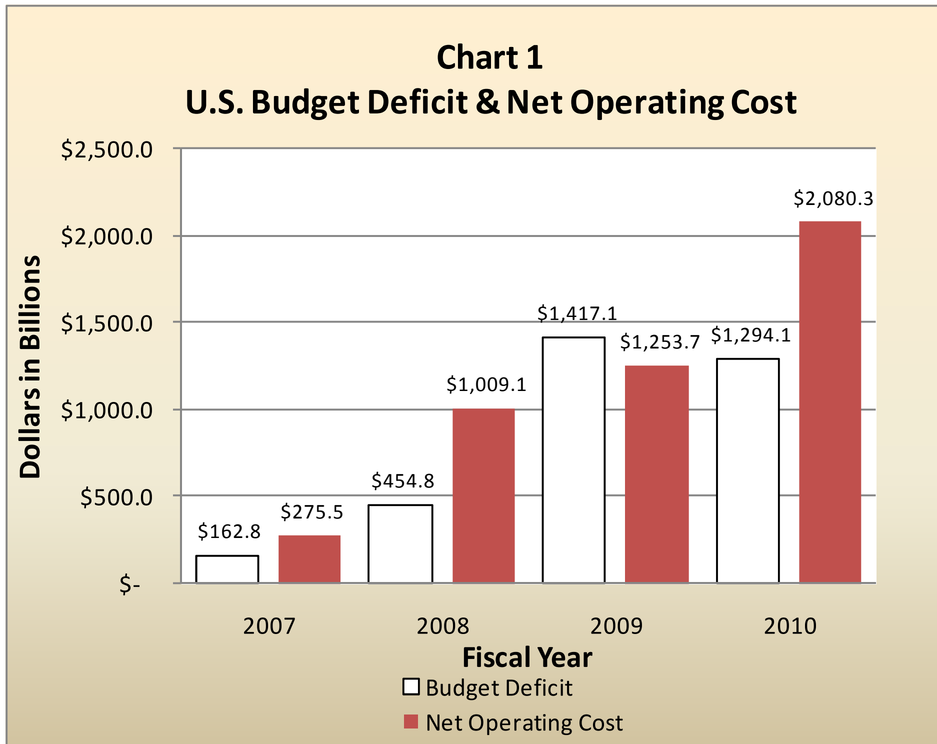
CITIZEN’S GUIDE TO THE 2010 FINANCIAL REPORT OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

A Citizen's Guide to the Fiscal Year 2010 Financial Report of the United States Government

OVERVIEW

The Citizen's Guide to the Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 Financial Report of the U.S. Government presents the Nation's financial position and condition of the U.S. Government and discusses key financial topics, including continuing economic recovery efforts and fiscal sustainability.

Despite the severe economic downturn and recession that began at the end of 2007, the instability of the financial markets in 2008, and the necessary measures taken to help the economy recover in 2008 and 2009, the economy began to grow again in FY 2010. After falling by 2.7 percent during FY 2009, real Gross Domestic Product (GDP)[1] rose at an average annual rate of 3.2 percent over the four quarters of FY 2010; the economy added 691,000 private nonfarm payroll jobs during FY 2010, after losing 6.3 million private jobs from private nonfarm payrolls during FY 2009. Increased Federal tax receipts and a decline in outlays resulted in a narrowing of the primarily cash-based U.S. budget deficit from $1.4 trillion to $1.3 trillion in FY 2010 while net operating cost increased significantly from $1.3 trillion to $2.1 trillion due in large part to increased estimated costs for federal employee and veteran benefits. ***See 'Where We Are Now', p.* iv.**



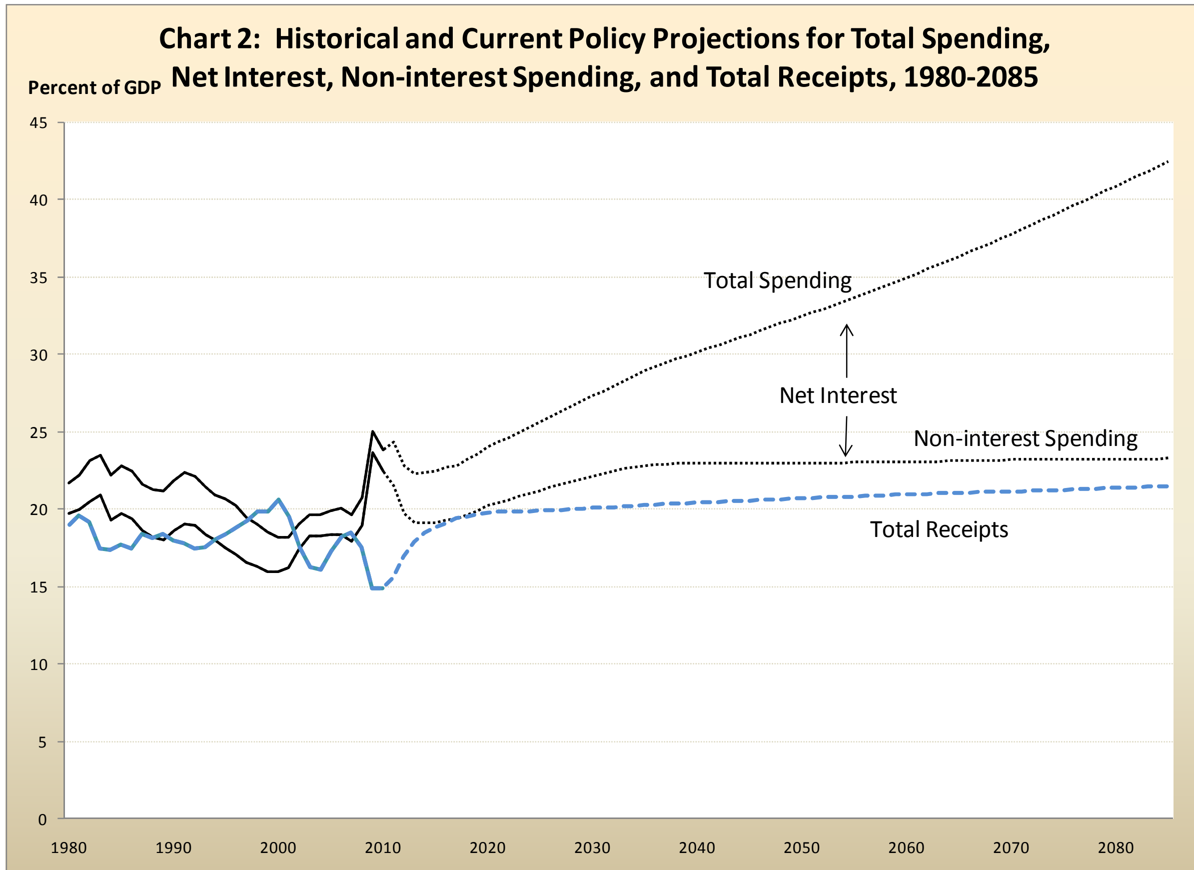
Some Government programs act as "automatic stabilizers," helping to support the economy during a downturn by increasing spending and reducing tax collections. This support is "automatic" because increased spending on programs like unemployment benefits, Social Security, and Medicaid and a reduction in tax receipts happen even without any legislative changes in policies. These automatic

[1] Real GDP measures the value of final goods and services produced in the economy, adjusted for changes in the overall price level (i.e., for inflation).

stabilizers had caused deficits and net operating costs to surge in recent years, but should decline as the economy recovers.

Policies enacted to foster economic recovery, including the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008 (HERA), the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 (EESA), and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act or ARRA), continue to affect the Government's financial position. Implementation of these and other initiatives represent unprecedented efforts to stabilize the financial markets, jump-start the Nation's economy, and create or save millions of jobs. Already, the Government and the taxpayer have begun to see returns on some of these investments as evidenced by substantial repayments made under the Troubled Assets Relief Program (TARP). ***See 'The Economic Recovery Effort', p. vii.***

While the Government's immediate priority is to continue to foster economic recovery, there are longer term fiscal challenges that must ultimately be addressed. Persistent growth of health care costs and the aging of the population due to the retirement of the "baby boom" generation and increasing longevity will make it increasingly difficult to fund critical social programs, including notably Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. Chart 2 shows this growing gap between receipts and total spending, indicating that, as currently structured, the Government's fiscal path cannot be sustained indefinitely (see Chart 2). ***See 'Where We Are Headed' p. viii.***



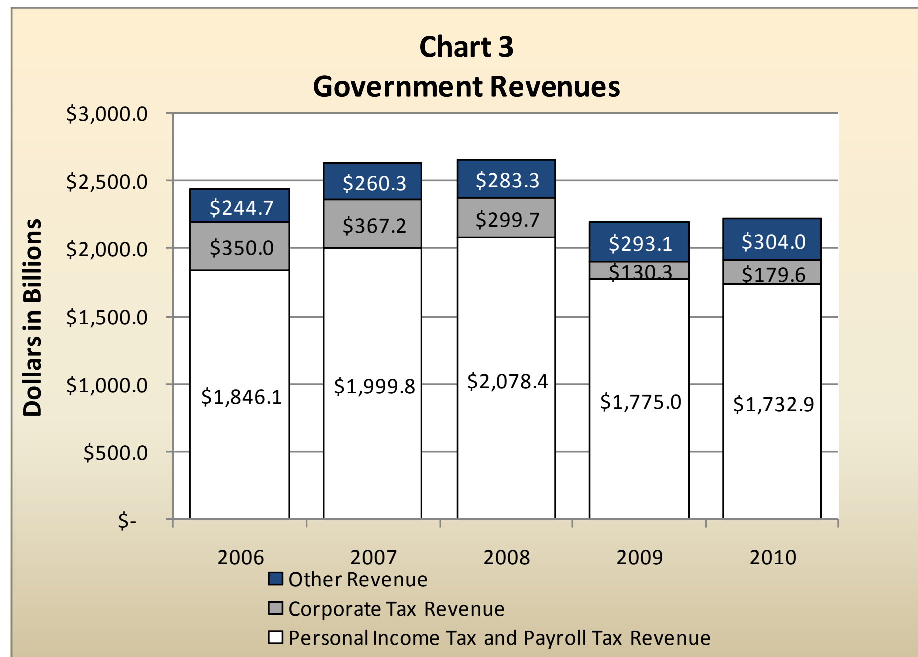
This Guide highlights important information contained in the *2010 Financial Report of the United States Government*. The Secretary of the Treasury, Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and Acting Comptroller General of the United States believe that the information discussed in this Guide is important to all Americans.

Where We Are Now

The Economy

The economy began to grow again during FY 2010, after emerging in FY 2009 from the longest and deepest recession since World War II. Although the residential homebuilding sector slumped further during much of fiscal year 2010, nonresidential investment and consumer spending increased. The economy began adding jobs consistently in January 2010, and during FY 2010, added 691,000 private nonfarm payroll jobs (after losing 6.3 million private jobs from private nonfarm payrolls during the previous fiscal year). Overall inflation turned positive over the course of the year, as energy prices increased, but remained well in check, reflecting persistent slack in the economy. The core inflation rate (which excludes food and energy) remained positive, but slowed to half the rate of the previous fiscal year. Real wages rose, but at a much slower pace than in FY 2009, due to the combination of slower nominal wage growth and rising consumer prices. The level of corporate profits increased in FY 2010 over the previous fiscal year, though on a quarterly basis, profits rose faster during the first half of the fiscal year than the latter half. Federal tax receipts rose and spending growth declined, such that in FY 2010, the budget deficit narrowed to $1,294 billion or 8.9 percent of GDP. The economy continued to receive significant support during the fiscal year by a wide variety of measures implemented under the Recovery Act, which authorizes the Government to spend $787 billion towards stimulating domestic demand.

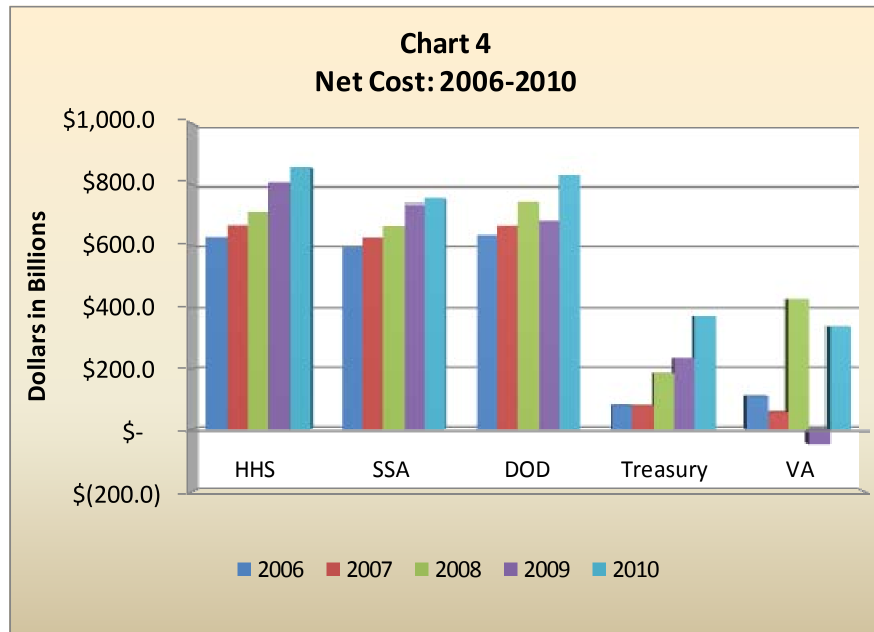
What Came In and What Went Out



What came in? Total Government revenues (calculated using a modified cash basis of accounting) remained relatively unchanged, increasing by just over $18 billion to remain at about $2.2 trillion in FY 2010 as the economy continues to recover. Chart 3 shows that corporate tax revenue rebounded during FY 2010, increasing by nearly 40 percent, after decreasing by more than 50 percent during FY 2009. However, in dollar terms, the $49.3 billion corporate tax increase and a slight increase in other tax revenue was partially offset by a slight decrease (2.4 percent or $42.1 billion) in personal income tax revenue to keep total revenues relatively stable. Together, personal and corporate taxes accounted for about 86 percent of total revenues.

What went out? To derive its net cost ($4.3 trillion in FY 2010), the Government subtracts revenues earned from Government programs (e.g., Medicare premiums, National Park entry fees, and postal service fees) from its gross costs. Chart 4 shows that the largest contributors to the Government’s net cost in recent years consistently include the Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Defense (DoD) and the Social Security Administration (SSA). The bulk of HHS and SSA costs are attributable to major social insurance and postemployment benefits programs administered by those agencies. Similarly, much of DoD’s costs are also associated with its Military Retirement Fund, as well as its current operations. In fact, across the Government, just the change in actuarial and other estimated costs associated with the change in estimated postemployment benefit, accounted for more than $538 billion or 62 percent of the total change in the Government’s net cost of $861.3 billion

for FY 2010. Further, the long-term nature of these costs and their sensitivity to a wide range of complex assumptions can, in some cases, cause significant fluctuation in agency and Governmentwide costs from year to year. Chart 4 shows that this has been the case at VA in its administration of veterans benefit programs where an actuarial cost decrease of more than $480 billion in FY 2009 was followed by a $373 billion increase in FY 2010. At VA and other agencies that administer postemployment benefit programs, these fluctuations are attributable to an array of assumptions and variables including interest rates, inflation, beneficiary eligibility, life expectancy, and cost of living. As such, in FY 2010, a new Federal accounting standard[2] requires agencies to separately identify the gains and losses associated with changes in assumptions and use a more standardized approach to calculate them.



Finally, Chart 4 shows that the Treasury Department's administration of many of the recently implemented economic recovery programs makes it another significant contributor to total Government costs. Altogether, the agencies reflected in Chart 4 account for nearly three-fourths of total Government net cost.

To arrive at the Government's "bottom line" net operating cost, the Government subtracts taxes and other revenues (Chart 3) from its net cost. A nearly 25 percent increase in net cost, combined with relatively constant revenues of $2.2 trillion, translated into two-thirds increase in the Government's "bottom line" net operating cost from $1.3 trillion in FY 2009 to $2.1 trillion in FY 2010.

Cost vs. Deficit: What's the Difference?

The ***Budget of the United States Government*** (President's Budget) is the Government's primary financial planning and control tool. It describes how the Government spent and plans to spend the public's money, comparing *receipts*, or cash received by the Government, with *outlays*, or payments made by the Government to the public. Outlays are measured primarily on a cash basis and receipts are measured on a purely cash basis. The ***Financial Report of the United States Government*** (Financial Report) reports on the Government's accrual-based costs, the sources used to finance those costs, how much the Government owns and owes, and the outlook for fiscal sustainability. It compares the Government's *revenues*, or amounts that the Government has collected and expects to collect, but has not necessarily received, with its *costs* (recognized when owed, but not necessarily paid) to derive net operating cost. Together, the President's Budget and the Financial Report present a complementary perspective on the Nation's financial health and provide a valuable decision-making and management tool for the country's

Table 1: Budget Deficit vs. Net Operating Cost

Dollars in Billions	2010	2009
Net Operating Cost	**$ (2,080.3)**	**$ (1,253.7)**
Change in:		
Liabilities for Veteran's Compensation	$ 223.8	$ (149.2)
Liabilities for Military and Civilian Employee Benefits	$ 279.3	$ 114.0
Liabilities for Government Sponsored Enterprises	$ 268.0	$ 78.1
Downward Reestimate for TARP	$ 86.4	$ (110.0)
Other, Net	$ (71.3)	$ (96.3)
Budget Deficit	**$ (1,294.1)**	**$ (1,417.1)**

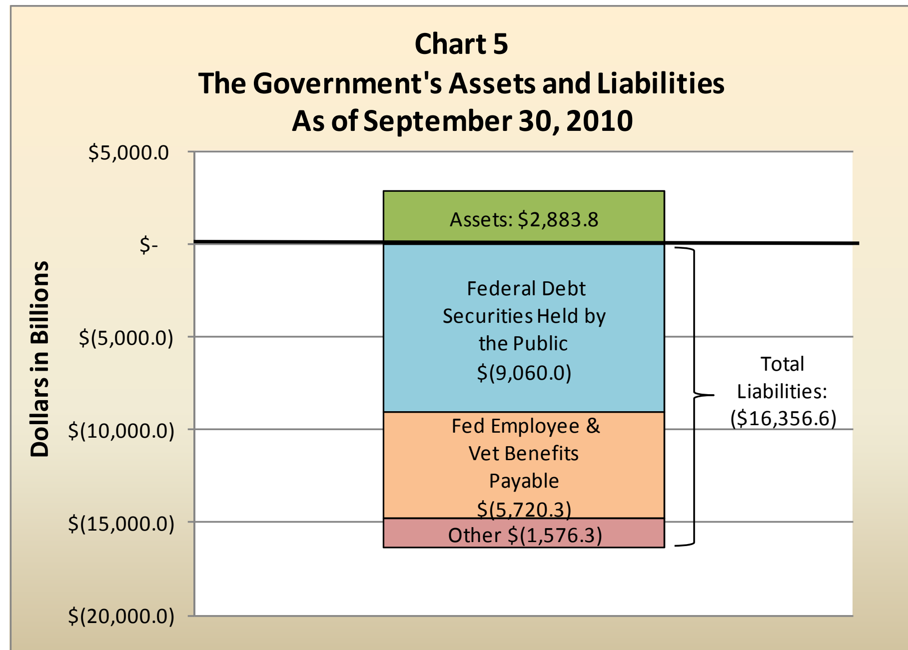
Source: Statements of Reconciliations of Net Operating Cost and Unified Budget Deficit

[2] Statement of Federal Financial Accounting Standard 33, Pe*nsions, Other Retirement Benefits, and Other Postemployment Benefits: Reporting the Gains and Losses from the Changes in Assumptions and Selecting Discount Rates and Valuation Dates.*

leaders. Table 1 on the previous page shows that, for FY 2010, the major differences between deficit and cost are amounts reported in the Financial Report for anticipated changes in amounts the Government will owe for Federal employee and veteran benefits, as well as anticipated future investments in Government Sponsored Enterprises (GSEs), specifically Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

What We Own and What We Owe

Chart 5 is a summary of what the Government owns in assets and what it owes in liabilities. As of September 30, 2010, the Government held about $2.9 trillion in assets, comprised mostly of net property, plant, and equipment ($828.9 billion in FY 2010) and a combined total of $942.5 billion in net loans receivable and investments. During FY 2010, the Government's total assets increased by $215.9 billion, due mostly to a nearly $100 billion increase in net loans receivable and investments.



As indicated in Chart 5, the Government's largest liabilities are: (1) Federal debt held by the public and accrued interest, the balance of which increased from $7.6 trillion to $9.1 trillion during FY 2010 due primarily to the continued need to fund the budget deficit, and (2) Federal employee postemployment and veteran benefits payable, which increased during FY 2010, from $5.3 trillion to $5.7 trillion.

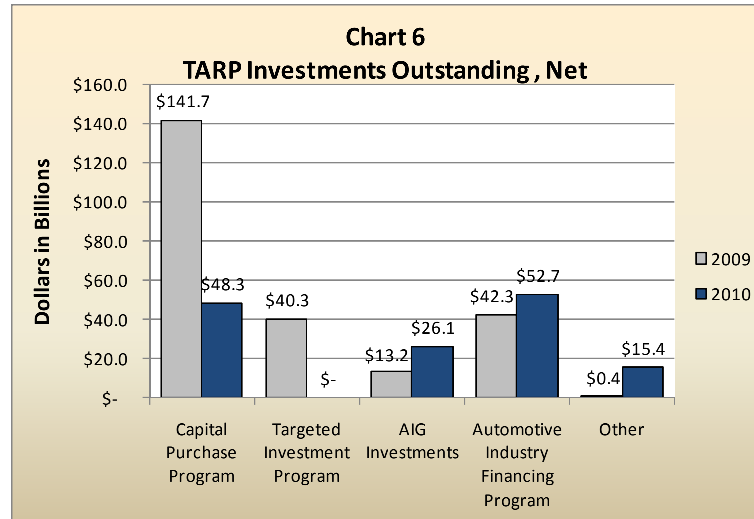
In addition to debt held by the public, the Government reports about $4.6 trillion of intragovernmental debt outstanding, which arises when one part of the Government borrows from another. It represents debt held by Government funds, including the Social Security and Medicare trust funds, which are typically required to invest any excess annual receipts in Federal debt securities. Because these amounts are both liabilities of the Treasury and assets of the Government trust funds, they are eliminated in the consolidation process for the Governmentwide financial statements. The sum of debt held by the public and intragovernmental debt equals gross Federal debt ($13.7 trillion as of September 30, 2010), which (with some adjustments) is subject to a statutory ceiling (i.e., the debt limit). As of September 30, 2010, the debt limit was $14.3 trillion, having been raised multiple times in recent years.

If budget deficits continue to occur, the Government will have to borrow more from the public. Instances where the debt held by the public increases faster than the economy for extended periods can pose additional challenges. The remainder of this Guide examines these and other indicators of the challenges the Government will face in maintaining long-term fiscal sustainability.

The Economic Recovery Effort

Since the financial crisis in 2008, the Treasury Department, the Federal Reserve, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), and other U.S. Government bodies have taken actions to help stabilize financial markets and pave the way for sustained economic recovery.

The Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008 (HERA) established the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA), to regulate the housing Government-Sponsored Enterprises (GSEs), including Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. HERA also authorized the Treasury Department to provide financial support for the housing GSEs through such programs as the Senior Preferred Stock Purchase Agreements (SPSPA) program, which provides that the Government will make funding advances to Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac as needed to ensure that the GSEs have sufficient assets to support their liabilities; and the GSE-guaranteed mortgage-backed securities (MBS) purchase program (which was terminated as of December 31, 2009). As of September 30, 2010, Treasury's cumulative payments to Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac were $85.1 billion and $63.1 billion, respectively and a combined $359.9 billion has been accrued as a contingent liability. Under the MBS program, Treasury has purchased approximately $225.5 billion of MBS, and has received back $75 billion in principal and interest. These efforts have helped bring down mortgage rates to historically low levels and provide liquidity to housing markets.



The Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 (EESA) created the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) and provided the Secretary of the Treasury with the authorities and facilities necessary to help restore liquidity and stability to the U.S. financial system and help ensure that such authorities are used in a manner that protects home values, college funds, retirement accounts, and life savings; preserves homeownership; promotes jobs and economic growth; maximizes overall returns to taxpayers; and provides public accountability. EESA provided authority for TARP to purchase or guarantee up to $700 billion in troubled assets. The Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act reduced cumulative authority to $475 billion, in line with expected investment amounts.

Many of the investments under TARP, particularly those aimed at stabilizing banks through the Capital Purchase Program, have delivered positive returns for taxpayers. In addition, Treasury is beginning to recover investments in the auto industry, and American International Group (AIG) has announced a restructuring plan, which, if completed as announced, will accelerate the company's timeline for repaying the Federal Government. Chart 6 shows how TARP's net investments have changed during FY 2010. Since TARP's inception on October 8, 2008 through September 30, 2010, Treasury has disbursed $387.7 billion in direct loans and investments under TARP. Over half ($204.1 billion) of those funds has been repaid, and the investments have generated $27.8 billion from cash received through interest and dividends, as well as proceeds from the sale and repurchase of assets in excess of cost. As of September 30, 2010, TARP had $179.2 billion in gross outstanding direct loans and equity investments, valued at $142.5 billion.

Due to the inherent uncertainty in the assumptions used in estimating TARP valuations, the ultimate cost of TARP investments is also subject to uncertainty, and will depend on, among other things, how the economy, financial markets, and particular companies perform. Additional information concerning the TARP program and other related initiatives can be found at www.financialstability.gov.

Improvement in the economic and financial outlook since the spring of 2009 reflects a broad and aggressive policy response that included the HERA and TARP initiatives and programs, other financial stability policies implemented by the FDIC and the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve, accommodative monetary policy, and the Recovery Act. Readers may find the most up-to-date information on where and how Recovery Act funds are being used at www.recovery.gov

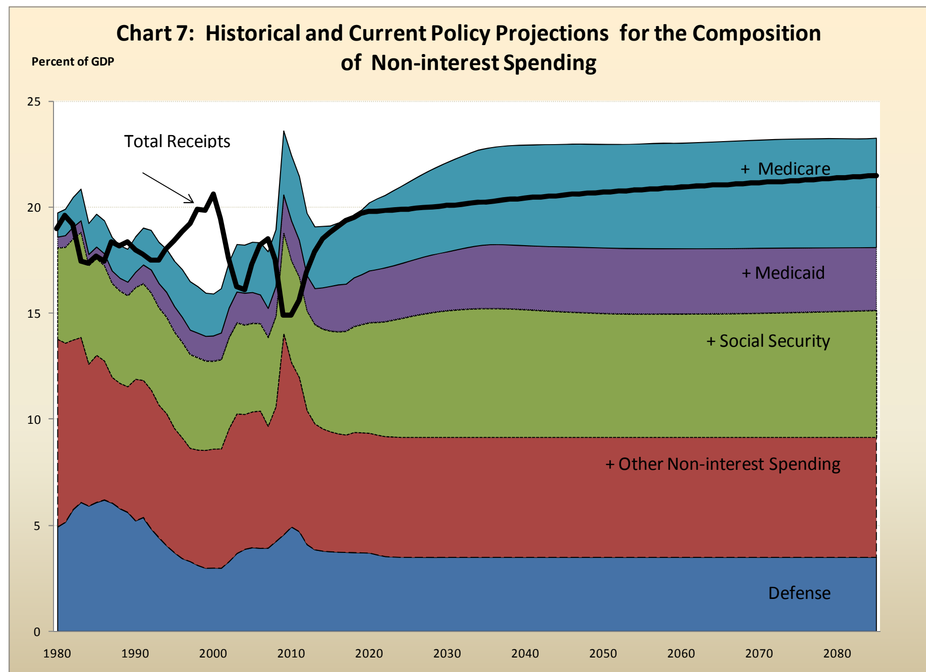
Where We Are Headed

An important purpose of the Financial Report is to help citizens and policymakers assess whether current fiscal policy is sustainable and, if it is not, the urgency and magnitude of policy reforms necessary to make it sustainable. A sustainable policy is one where the ratio of debt held by the public to GDP (the debt-to-GDP ratio) is stable in the long run. Sustainability concerns only whether long-run revenues and expenditures are in balance; it does not concern fairness or efficiency implications of the reforms necessary to achieve sustainability.

To determine if current fiscal policies are sustainable, the projections in this report assume current policies will be sustained indefinitely and draw out the implications for the growth of public debt as a share of GDP. The projections are therefore neither forecasts nor predictions. If policy changes are enacted, perhaps in response to projections like those presented here, then the projections will of course prove to be untrue.

The Primary Deficit, Interest, and the Debt

The primary deficit – the difference between non-interest spending and receipts – is the only determinant of the ratio of public debt to GDP that the Government controls directly. (The other determinants are interest rates and growth in GDP). Chart 2 on page iii and Chart 7 both show receipts, non-interest spending, and the difference – the primary deficit – expressed as a share of GDP. The primary deficit-to-GDP ratio grew rapidly in 2008 and 2009 due to the financial crisis and the recession, and the policies pursued to combat both, and is projected to fall rapidly to near zero in the next few years as the economy recovers. After 2020, the primary deficit-to-GDP ratio is projected to increase, reaching 2 percent in 2030 and remaining at or above 1.8 percent through the end of the 75-year projection period and beyond.



The revenue share of GDP fell substantially in 2009 and 2010 because of the recession and tax reductions enacted as part of the Recovery Act and is projected to return to near its long-run average as the economy recovers and the Recovery Act tax cuts expire. After the economy is fully recovered, receipts are projected to grow slightly more rapidly than GDP as increases in real incomes cause a larger share of income to fall into higher individual income tax brackets.

The projected increase in non-interest spending as a percent of GDP is principally due to growth in spending for Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security.[3] Between 2017 when the projected primary deficit is about zero and 2035

[3] The 2010 Medicare Trustees Report projects that, with enactment of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), the Hospital Insurance (HI) Trust Fund will remain solvent until 2029 under current law – 12 years longer than was projected in the 2009 Trustees Report. The projected share of scheduled benefits that can be paid from trust fund income is 85 percent in 2029, declines to about 77 percent in 2050, and then increases to 89 percent in 2084. The Social Security Trust Funds also face a long-run shortfall. Under current law, the OASDI Trust Funds are projected to be exhausted in 2037 and the projected share of scheduled benefits payable from trust fund income is 78 percent in 2037 and 75 percent in 2084. There is uncertainty about whether the projected reductions in health care cost growth, based on current law, will be fully achieved.

when the non-interest spending share of GDP plateaus, these expenditure categories account for essentially all of the increase in the ratio of non-interest spending to GDP. These spending increases reflect rapid aging of the population as the baby boom generations retire, as well as rising health care costs. After 2035, it is projected that continued increases in longevity will cause the population to become still older, but at a very gradual pace.

The primary deficit projections in Chart 7, along with those for interest rates and GDP, determine the projections for the ratio of debt held by the public to GDP that are shown in Chart 8. That ratio was 62 percent at the end of fiscal year 2010, and under current policy is projected to exceed 70 percent in 2020, 130 percent in 2040, and 350 percent in 2085. Continued aging of the population due to increasing longevity will place upward pressure on the debt-to-GDP ratio beyond 75 years if there is no change in policy.

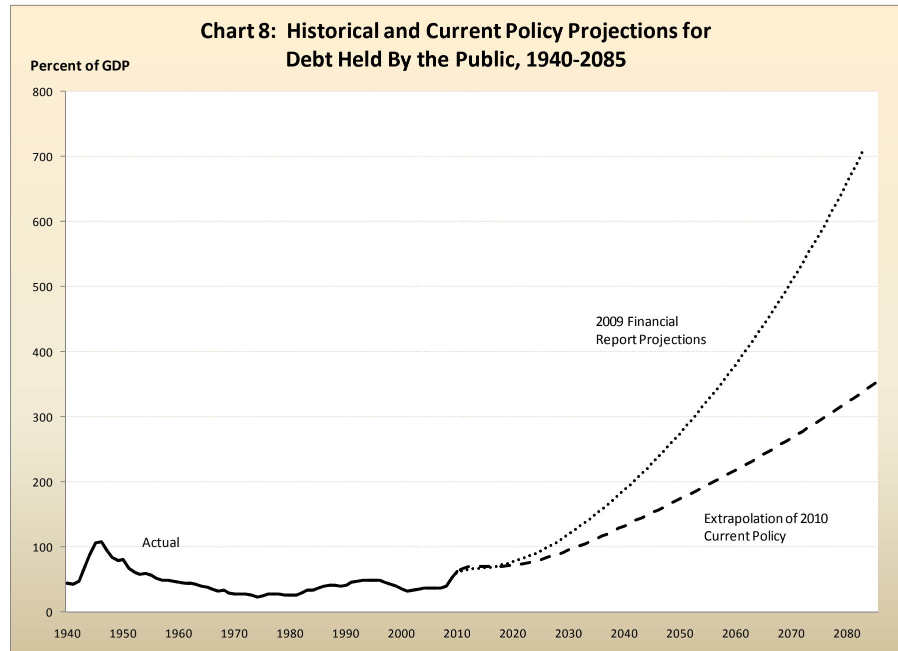


Chart 8 also shows the 2009 Financial Report projection of debt held by the public as a percent of GDP. The 2010 projection is lower than the 2009 projection in every year of the projection period almost entirely as a result of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), which is projected to significantly lower Medicare spending and raise receipts. As discussed in the Financial Report, there is uncertainty about whether the projected cost reductions in health care cost growth will be fully achieved.

The Fiscal Gap and the Cost of Delaying Policy Reform

It is estimated that preventing the debt-to-GDP ratio from rising over the next 75 years would require running primary surpluses over the period that average 0.5 percent of GDP. This compares with an average primary deficit of 1.9 percent of GDP under current policy. The difference, the "75-year fiscal gap," is 2.4 percent of GDP.

Closing the 75-year fiscal gap requires some combination of expenditure reductions and revenue increases that amount to 2.4 percent of GDP on average over the next 75 years. The timing of such changes has important implications for the well-being of future generations. For example, it is estimated that the magnitude of reforms necessary to close the 75-year fiscal gap is 50 percent larger if reforms are concentrated into the last 55 years of the 75-year period than if they are spread over the entire 75 years.

Conclusion

The United States took a potentially significant step towards fiscal sustainability in 2010 by enacting the ACA. The legislated changes for Medicare, Medicaid, and other parts of the health care system hold the prospect of lowering the long-term growth trend for health care costs and significantly reducing the long-term fiscal gap. But even with the new law, the debt-to-GDP ratio is projected to increase continually over the next 75 years and beyond if current policies are kept in place, which means current policies are not sustainable. Subject to the important caveat that policy changes not be so abrupt that they slow the economy's recovery, the sooner policies are put in place to avert these trends, the smaller are the revenue increases and/or spending decreases necessary to return the Nation to a sustainable fiscal path.

While this Report's projections of expenditures and receipts under current policies are highly uncertain, there is little question that current policies cannot be sustained indefinitely.

Looking Ahead

The Nation continues to face extraordinary financial and fiscal challenges. Signs of progress are already evident as Treasury and the Government as a whole have initiated an array of efforts to foster continued economic recovery. Realizing the true return on those efforts requires perseverance and patience. However, even as the Government continues its current efforts to foster economic growth, it cannot lose sight of the long-term fiscal challenges associated with its social insurance programs. The Nation must bring social insurance expenses and resources into balance before the deficit and debt reach unprecedented heights. Delays will only increase the magnitude of the reforms needed and will place more of the burden on future generations. While there is still more work to be done and both near- and long-term challenges remain, the Federal Government has already accomplished a great deal during this fiscal year and anticipates continued progress in the years to come.

Find Out More

You will find more detail on the issues discussed in this Guide in the *2010 Financial Report of the United States Government*, issued by the U.S. Department of the Treasury. The Report provides a comprehensive view of both the Government's current financial position and prospects for moving forward. It further discusses the steps the Federal Government has taken to restore stability in the U.S. financial system and the fiscal challenges of the future. The issues discussed in the Citizens' Guide and the *Financial Report* affect, and should be of interest to, every citizen. The *Financial Report's* comprehensive reporting is intended to inform and support the decision-making needs of lawmakers and the public and to help keep the United States on solid financial ground.

You are encouraged to explore the information the Report contains and to ask questions about how the Government manages taxpayers' money. The *2010 Financial Report of the United States Government* and other information about the Nation's finances are available at:

- U.S. Department of the Treasury's Financial Management Service, http://www.fms.treas.gov/fr/index.html;
- OMB's Office of Federal Financial Management, http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/financial/index.html; and
- GAO, http://www.gao.gov/financial.html.

This Citizen's Guide highlights information in the 2010 Financial Report. The Government Accountability Office's (GAO) complete audit report on the U.S. Government's consolidated financial statements can be found beginning on page 221 of the Financial Report. GAO disclaimed an opinion on the 2010 Statement of Social Insurance (SOSI) because of significant uncertainties (discussed in note 26 in the Financial Report) primarily related to the achievement of projected reductions in Medicare cost growth reflected in the 2010 SOSI. However, GAO issued an unqualified or 'clean' opinion on the 2009, 2008, and 2007 SOSIs. In addition, certain material financial reporting control weaknesses and other limitations on the scope of its work prevented GAO from expressing an opinion on the remaining FY 2010 and 2009 financial statements in the Financial Report.

Government's Financial Position and Condition

The Financial Report of the U.S. Government (Report) provides the President, Congress, and the American people a comprehensive view of how the Federal Government is managing taxpayer dollars. It discusses the Government's financial position and condition, its revenues and costs, assets and liabilities, and other responsibilities and commitments, as well as important financial issues that affect the Nation and its citizens both now and in the future.

The following table presents several key indicators of the Government's financial position and condition, which are discussed in greater detail in the Report.

NATION BY THE NUMBERS

A Snapshot of The Government's Financial Position & Condition

billions of dollars	2010	2009
Gross Costs	**$ (4,472.3)**	**$ (3,735.6)**
Earned Revenues	$ 309.2	$ 300.9
Gain / (Loss) from Assumptions	$ (132.9)	n/a
Net Cost	**$ (4,296.0)**	**$ (3,434.7)**
Total Taxes and Other Revenues	**$ 2,216.5**	**$ 2,198.4**
Other	$ (0.8)	$ (17.4)
Net Operating Cost	**$ (2,080.3)**	**$ (1,253.7)**
Assets:	**$ 2,883.8**	**$ 2,667.9**
Less: Liabilities, comprised of:		
Debt Held By the Public	$ (9,060.0)	$ (7,582.7)
Federal Employee & Veteran Benefits	$ (5,720.3)	$ (5,283.7)
Other	$ (1,576.3)	$ (1,257.4)
Total Liabilities	**$ (16,356.6)**	**$ (14,123.8)**
Net Position (Assets Minus Liabilities)	**$ (13,472.8)**	**$ (11,455.9)**
Sustainability Measures:		
Statement of Social Insurance: [1]		
Closed Group (current participants) [2]	$ (43,058)	$ (52,145)
Open Group (current + future participants) [3]	$ (30,857)	$ (45,878)
Social Insurance as Percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP)[4]:		
Closed Group (current participants)	-5.1%	-6.6%
Open Group (current + future participants)	-3.7%	-5.8%
Budget Results		
Unified Budget Deficit	**$ (1,294.1)**	**$ (1,417.1)**

1 Present value of projected revenues and expenditures for scheduled benefits over the next 75 years of certain benefit programs that are referred to as Social Insurance (e.g., Social Security, Medicare). Not considered liabilites on the balance sheet.

2 Includes current participants (i.e., receiving and/or are eligible to receive benefits) for the Social Security and Medicare programs ages 15 and over at the start of the 75-year projection period, except for the 2007 Medicare programs for which current participants are assumed to be at least 18 years of age at the start of the 75-year projection period.

3 Includes all current and future projected participants over the 75-year projection period.

4 Social Insurance values as reported in the Statement of Social Insurance. GDP values from the 2010 Social Security and Medicare Trustees Reports represent the present value of GDP over the 75 year projection period.

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