

To the office of U.S. Senator Rick Scott

Re: S 5442 (119th Congress), Cost Estimates Improvement Act • Latest action (2026-09-17): Read twice and referred to the Committee on the Budget.

VFA SI Solution #415 • published 2026-10-15 • <https://www.valuesforamerica.com/solutions/415>

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Honest Debt Cost Estimates with Limits and Review

The measure, as described from the official record: Make federal cost estimates more complete by showing how new spending or tax bills would change interest costs on the public debt.

THE PROPOSAL

Congress has the power to set its own rules. Article I, Section 5, Clause 2 grants each House control over its proceedings. Article I, Section 8, Clause 1 grants power over spending and revenue. Those powers authorize Congress to require debt-service scoring for its own decisions. This keeps power with elected lawmakers.

The VFA proposal would keep the original goal and make it workable. It would direct the Congressional Budget Office and the Joint Committee on Taxation to add a clear debt-service section to each public cost estimate. That section would show added interest costs over 10 years and over 30 years, with key rate assumptions stated in short sentences.

The proposal would set firm limits. It would apply only to public estimates for bills reported by a committee. It would not create new power to tax, spend, or borrow. It would not change benefits, tax liability, or eligibility under any program. Disputes over method would go to the Budget Committees for a written ruling, with full due process for affected parties under current law.

The proposal would control cost and force review. Added work would be capped at \$4 million per year from current funds for the two estimating bodies. The Comptroller General would audit accuracy each year in a public report. The rule would expire after six years unless Congress votes to extend it, so lawmakers can fix methods that prove weak.

The strongest objection is that interest forecasts can be wrong and may tilt debate. The answer is transparency plus a sunset. Fixed rate ranges, published models, outside review, and a firm end date would keep the estimate honest without handing new power to unelected staff.

OPERATIVE PROVISIONS (VFA PROPOSAL)

Effective Date	Applies to cost estimates requested on or after 180 days after enactment.
Enforcement Mechanism	Estimates that omit required debt-service figures are returned for correction; no funds are withheld from existing programs and no private penalty applies.

Funding Amount	Capped at \$4 million per year for added staff and models
Funding Source	Existing appropriations for the Congressional Budget Office and the Joint Committee on Taxation
Oversight Body	Comptroller General with annual public report to the House and Senate Budget Committees
Sunset Years	6 years

CONSTITUTIONAL BASIS

- Article I, Section 5, Clause 2
- Article I, Section 8, Clause 1
- Fifth Amendment Due Process

Concerns with the measure as written:

- No direct Bill of Rights violation is stated in the official summary, but any new scoring rule must not delay or deny due process in spending programs without clear notice.
- Congress must use its own rulemaking power rather than directing outside parties, consistent with separation of powers.

WHY BOTH SIDES CAN BACK IT (VFA'S ASSESSMENT)

VFA assesses this draft honors Democratic priorities for honest budgeting and protection of public investments by showing the true borrowing cost of new bills. VFA assesses it honors Republican priorities for fiscal restraint, spending control, and smaller long-term deficits by making debt costs visible before votes occur.

Strongest objection, and the answer: The strongest objection is that interest forecasts can be wrong and may tilt debate. The answer is transparency plus a sunset.

CHECK BEFORE RELYING ON THIS

Basis: The Congress.gov summary of S. 5442 from the 119th Congress states the bill would require cost estimates prepared by the Congressional Budget Office or the Joint Committee on Taxation to include the costs of servicing the public debt, and the official record states it was read twice and referred to the Committee on the Budget on September 17, 2026.

The full bill text and current law were not shown in the official summary. Readers should verify at Congress.gov the exact estimate types covered, the scoring window, methods for interest calculations, appeal rights, eligibility effects, total cost, and any conflict with existing budget statutes. Safeguards and reviews described here are new proposals and not existing rights.

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