

Catfish inspectors among \$25 billion cuts in Obama's budget

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President Obama will target duplicate catfish inspection programs as he tries to cut \$25 billion in wasteful spending from his budget proposal.
WASHINGTON (CNNMoney)

Catfish inspectors are facing the knife on President Obama's budget menu.

They are among \$25 billion of wasteful and duplicate spending targeted by [the president's budget](#) that will be released Wednesday, according to an administration official.

By cutting one of two catfish inspection programs at different federal agencies, for instance, the government could save some \$14 million.

It's part of 215 proposals from Obama to save money by streamlining various federal programs. They include eliminating a redundant Air Force satellite system and also consolidating 220 science, technology, engineering and math programs across 13 agencies.

Separately, a report by the non-partisan Congressional watchdog, the U.S. Government Accountability Office, released Tuesday also identified 31 new areas of **waste and duplication**. The GAO said the government can save \$82 million just by getting the different military departments to agree on one or two types of camouflage for their uniforms, instead of the current seven "varying patterns and colors."

Republicans, in particular, are interested in cutting waste, because they say it's key to buffering the **\$85 billion automatic, across-the-board budget cuts** that kicked in on March 1.

The House Oversight Committee is holding a hearing Tuesday on the new GAO report. In recent years, the House has passed several bills that drastically slashes all kinds of spending. However, those bills have gone nowhere, because the Senate hasn't taken them up.

It's hard for Washington to cut waste, because every program has **its own fan club**. In 2011, for instance, Obama suggested scrapping Voice of America's radio broadcast in China, because studies showed few people were listening. But House Republicans wanted to send the program an additional \$14 million to keep it on air.

In 2012, GAO suggested \$1.2 billion in savings by getting rid of federal crop insurance subsidies for rich farmers to reduce subsidies.

Rural lawmakers from both political parties said they were hesitant to limit such insurance, especially **after a drought that ruined many crops in 2012**. Last summer,

the Senate took a symbolic step by passing a scaled back measure that trimmed crop insurance subsidies by 15% for farmers with \$750,000 in total sales. But that too went nowhere.

The key reason why Washington has failed to slash spending for so long is the lack of an official budget. Congress hasn't worked together to pass an official budget in the past four years. Instead, Congress has resorted to passing short-term funding measures, often waiting until the very last minute. The government is currently operating on a [**budget measure that runs out on Sept. 30.**](#)

"Right now, we have budget-making by crisis, and it has to be a major crisis, like a debt ceiling or a government shutdown," said Patrick Lester, fiscal policy director for the Center for Effective Government, a watchdog group.

Traditionally that process starts in February, when the president proposes his budget to start Oct. 1. President Obama is nearly two months late in offering his budget, which doesn't give Congress a lot of time.

Despite the lack of an official budgetary process, some progress has been made to root out waste, GAO noted. The White House, executive agencies and Congress have adopted 21% of the 300 suggestions GAO has made in the past three years and "made progress" on about 51% of its recommendations. ■