

New Fellow Spotlight: Theresa (Teri) Gullo

**Director of Budget Administration
Congressional Budget Office**



Teri has made enormous contributions to CBO’s work for the Congress for more than three decades. She began as an analyst, preparing dozens of cost estimates a year for proposed legislation involving natural resources. Teri was then chosen to be the first chief of CBO’s State and Local Government Cost Estimates Unit, which was responsible for implementing a new law (the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act) that required CBO to analyze federal mandates that legislation would impose on other levels of government. She led her team in formulating and codifying the principles that would underlie CBO’s analyses and the procedures that analysts would follow in estimating mandate costs.

In 2008, Teri was appointed Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis, and she played a critical role in guiding the Budget Analysis Division—CBO’s largest, with one-third of the agency’s staff. She was responsible for carefully reviewing most of CBO’s cost estimates for legislation being considered by the Congress, and she often dealt with complex analytical issues, continually evolving legislative proposals, and very tight deadlines. After serving in that position with distinction, Teri was promoted to the position of Assistant Director for Budget Analysis and is now responsible for supervising the division’s work. Each year, she oversees the careful preparation of several hundred formal cost estimates for legislation being considered by the Congress, as well as thousands of informal estimates that are provided to help committees craft legislation. The division also makes key contributions to many of CBO’s analytic reports and other work.

What are you most looking forward to as a NAPA Fellow?

I am looking forward to meeting, working with, and continuing to learn from some of the leading lights in the field of public policy and management, many of whom have been role models and mentors to me throughout my career. I am excited to have another avenue to contribute to strengthening the public sector as it faces new and daunting challenges.

What inspires you during these challenging times?

I am inspired everyday by my colleagues at CBO who are navigating this “new normal” world of remote work with amazing aplomb. I will admit I was nervous about how and whether we would be able to continue offering the Congress the same level of service we have always prided ourselves on providing. Although managing a large team of analysts remotely has sometimes been difficult, I am proud to say that my colleagues really have risen to the challenge and continue to work hard and collaborate effectively as we produce cost estimates and provide technical assistance to the Congress.

What do you enjoy most about the work you do?

The most enjoyable part of my job is working to train and mentor the next generation of analysts. I work for an organization whose mission I passionately believe in; having the opportunity to transmit that passion to new analysts and to prepare them to continue providing in-depth, well-reasoned, and nonpartisan analysis to the Congress gives me great satisfaction.

Who or what inspired you to work in public service?

My high school civics teacher made learning about government and public service so interesting that I don’t think I ever considered doing anything else since taking that course my senior year. I remember we read the book “O Congress” by then Representative Donald Riegle for that class. The book provides an inside look at the workings of Congress, and after reading it I was convinced that Washington DC (and particularly the Congress) was the place I wanted to work. Many years later, I attended a reception on Capitol Hill sponsored by my alma mater, Scripps College, and Senator Riegle (long retired by then) also attended with his daughter, another alumna. It was so much fun to introduce myself and tell him that he was one of my inspirations for pursuing a career in public service.

Which of the Academy's Grand Challenges resonate most with you?

I am guessing that it won't come as a surprise that advancing the nation's long-term fiscal health is of great interest to me. There are so many important questions to debate and answer: What are the consequences of high and rising public debt? What level of debt is sustainable? Even if the risks are more of a longer-term challenge, are there fiscal rules that could be applied in the short term to ensure fiscal sustainability while maintain an effective federal government.

A second interest of mine is modernizing and reinvigorating the public service. I am interested in how we can improve and streamline the system so that young, skilled analysts want to commit to public service. As more public employees reach retirement age, how do we attract new talent to public service? How do we create an environment that allows new, young talent to find meaningful work that makes a difference?

What advice can you give to folks beginning careers in public service?

One thing I tell new analysts is not to be afraid to ask questions. That's how you learn. I also tell them to be careful to cultivate a work-life balance that allows them to be resilient and well rounded. Finally, I advise new public servants to find what they are passionate about and do that. But to find that out, they may need to experiment and try new and different things.

What is the first concert you attended?

My brother and I attended Neil Young's Rust Never Sleeps concert at the Forum in Los Angeles in the mid-1970s. It was amazing. I never hear the song "Like a Hurricane" (the encore of that concert) without texting my brother to ask, "remember when?"