

Testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Judiciary Committee

Hearing on “The Need for the Balanced Budget Amendment”

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Texas - 04**

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Chairman Goodlatte, Ranking Member Conyers and my fellow Members on the Judiciary Committee, good morning and thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak on the importance of amending the Constitution to require the federal government to balance its budget.

The issue of balancing the budget is about more than dollars and cents. It's more than making sure federal spending doesn't exceed revenues.

It's about accountability to the people who elected us and restoring the trust that we've broken with the American people. Sure, we often talk about what needs to be done with passionate speeches and carefully crafted clichés that make for good sound bites.

But speaking candidly to you all today as colleagues, I'd ask if we're going to continue to promise results only to then later deliver excuses? Or can we instead agree to take head on the tough choices that are now necessary to preserve freedom and opportunity for future generations of Americans?

Mr. Chairman, the importance of these fundamental questions are what compelled me to introduce the toughest balanced budget amendment in Congress. Governing isn't easy. It's not supposed to be. Making tough decisions after careful deliberation, and explaining those decisions to our constituents with transparency and clarity – I'm pretty sure that's what we ALL signed up for.

The debate regarding a balanced budget amendment is nothing new. But the history of that debate is perhaps the most compelling argument that I can offer you regarding the imperative necessity of passing a balanced budget amendment.

Congress had the chance to do exactly that in 1994 when a balanced budget amendment passed the House only to fall a single vote short over in the Senate. The federal debt at that time was 4.6 trillion dollars. But without a balanced budget amendment, what followed over the last two decades are yearly waves of federal deficits from Congresses and Presidents of both parties. And the American people have watched the federal debt rise at an obscenely alarming rate, quadrupling to almost 20 trillion dollars.

Now critics and opponents will argue that the real cause of our fiscal imbalances is just a lack of political will, not something that can be cured by amending the process. But can any of us honestly look into the eyes of the American people and tell them we expect that to change without a constitutional constraint strong enough to stop legislators from being fiscally irresponsible? I can't and I won't.

The 700,000 Texans that I'm grateful to represent didn't elect me to posture and message. They elected me act and to lead on the toughest issues facing our country and impacting our children's future. I think all of our constituents want action and leadership. They are so tired of hearing us talk a good game, but then when it comes time to take action, watching us consistently fall short of the expectations that we set. No wonder Congress has such a low approval rating, we consistently over promise and under deliver.

So, Mr. Chairman, the opportunity and choice to change the narrative is really now ours. A balanced budget amendment will restore fiscal sanity. It will provide certainty to national finances. It will save future generations

from paying for the excesses of today. But most of all, a balanced budget amendment will restore trust in our government.

Let this be the Congress that is remembered for being on the right side of history.