



[Spending limit amendment stops the cycle of broken promises](#)

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A crisis is quickly approaching that will undermine the strength of our country and rob our children of their future prosperity. When it comes to getting our nation's fiscal house in order we are running out of options and the time to act is now.

Over the last five years, annual spending by the federal government increased from roughly \$2.5 trillion to over \$3.5 trillion. This year the government is expected to spend a record \$1.6 trillion more than it will collect in revenue and public debt will exceed the value of the entire economy by 2023. The rising costs of health care and the entitlements promised to the retiring Baby Boomer generation are leading causes of this national emergency. But there are other forces at work as well.

After a decade of runaway federal spending, the appetite in Washington to spend without regard to the taxpayer is still strong. Lawmakers from both political parties have broken their promises for fiscal responsibility and therefore have broken all historical records for deficits and debt. Our children will soon pay the price.

It is time to fundamentally change the way Washington spends taxpayer money and establish constitutional safeguards that will force the federal government to live within reasonable means. That is why I am proud to join Congressman Jeb Hensarling (R-Texas) in proposing the Spending Limit Amendment.

The proposed constitutional amendment would limit federal spending to one-fifth of the national economy. This reflects the historical standard set since the defeat of global totalitarianism during World War II. It ensures that the government can meet the growing demands of the country but in a responsible way. Federal spending can exceed this level only by declaring war or by a two-thirds vote in Congress.

This year, the economy is projected to reach \$14.6 trillion. That means if the spending limit amendment were the law of the land, the federal government would receive - at most - \$2.9 trillion to meet the basic needs of the American people. The burden of proof falls on those who believe the government deserves more than \$1 out of every \$5 of an economy built on the strength and sacrifice of American workers and businesses.

No doubt, some will try to make such an argument. Many in power believe government spending is the only sure foundation for economic growth. The philosophy of John Maynard Keynes is alive and well in Washington. But it's clear that government spending is not "picking up the slack," it is holding back any economic recovery we hope to achieve.

An economic study found that a one percent increase in government spending, as a share of the economy, increased unemployment by nearly four-tenths of one percent. That may not sound like much, but with unemployment hovering around 10 percent the impact will be felt by thousands of workers and their families.

If we fail to act, the quality of life for countless Americans will be diminished. We will see the effects on the streets of our communities and in the lives of our families and friends. Europe serves as a cautionary tale that we do not wish to welcome to our shores. Recent events in Greece are a startling reminder of the economic turmoil that can hit a nation when deficits and debt spiral out of control.

Runaway federal spending threatens not only our economic security but our national security as

well. This past February, the Washington Times reported that the Chinese military had stepped up pressure on the United States because of our relationship with the people of Taiwan. The source of Chinese leverage was the nearly \$800 billion in American debt they own. We should never be forced to sacrifice our moral responsibilities out of economic necessity.

As this fiscal storm gathers, the choices for reform become fewer and more costly. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimated that taxes will need to double just to cover the spending written into current law. At a time when too many families bear the burden of high taxes, the CBO has stated that this level of taxation is not "economically feasible."

That is why we need common sense health care reform that will lower costs for all Americans and responsible reform of entitlement programs to ensure we live up to the promises made to seniors and those in need of assistance. But these actions alone will not be enough.

The Spending Limit Amendment is one piece of the debate taking place right now across the country. The American people, concerned with the direction our country is taking, are asking once more: What is the proper size and role of the federal government? A lot rests on the answer to that question.

Congressman Hensarling and I believe the Spending Limit Amendment is an important part of that debate. We have a responsibility to look beyond the next election. Let's preserve for our posterity the prosperity we have been blessed to enjoy. Now is the time to do the right thing. Let the debate begin.

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