

**Statement of Congressman Bob Goodlatte  
Upon the Introduction of the Balanced Budget Constitutional Amendment  
January 4, 2007**

Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce legislation that will amend the United States Constitution to force Congress to rein in spending by balancing the federal budget.

It is common sense to American families that they cannot spend more than they have - yet far too frequently, this fundamental principle has been lost on a Congress that is too busy spending to pay attention to the bottom line.

Our federal government must be lean, efficient and responsible with the dollars that our nation's citizens worked so hard to earn. We must work to both eliminate every cent of waste and squeeze every cent of value out of each dollar our citizens entrust to us. Families all across our nation understand what it means to make tough decisions each day about what they can and cannot afford, corporate officers are required to act in the best interests of their shareholders when using company resources, and government officials should be held to similar standards when spending the hard-earned dollars of our nation's citizens.

Congress took a dramatic step forward last year when it passed the Deficit Reduction Act. This new law found savings of approximately \$40 billion over the next five years by eliminating wasteful spending and programs. This legislation was an important first step, but it was just that – a first step. Furthermore, the legislation was passed by the Senate by a margin of just one vote and was passed by the House by a margin of two votes, which shows exactly how difficult the task of balancing the budget is – and how important it is to force Congress to do so.

In the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, we were fortunate to have a majority in the House and Senate that had an appetite for reining in spending, but we still have to make considerable strides to achieve a balanced budget. Only time will tell whether future Congresses will have this appetite as well. However, one thing is certain– if we pass an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that requires a balanced budget, Congress will have to act accordingly regardless of which party is in control in Washington, D.C. This is exactly why I am introducing this legislation today.

My legislation would amend the Constitution to require that total spending for any fiscal year not exceed total receipts and require the president to propose budgets to Congress that are balanced each year. It would also provide an exception in times of military conflicts that pose imminent and serious military threats to national security.

Furthermore, the legislation would make it harder to increase taxes by requiring that legislation to increase revenue must be passed by a true majority of each chamber

and not just a majority of those present and voting. Finally, the bill requires a 3/5 majority vote for any increases in the debt limit.

This concept is not new. 49 out of 50 States have a balanced budget requirement.

It has become clear that it is extremely difficult for Congress to agree on a budget that is fiscally responsible. By amending the Constitution to require a balanced budget, we can force Congress to control spending, paving the way for a return to surpluses and ultimately paying down the national debt, rather than allow big spenders to lead us further down the road of chronic deficits and in doing so leave our children and grandchildren saddled with debt that is not their own.

Yesterday, President Bush also highlighted the importance of a balanced federal budget by announcing his plan to present Congress with a budget proposal that will balance the budget by 2012. I applaud the President for his announcement and look forward to working with him to bring fiscal responsibility back to the federal government.

Our nation faces many difficult decisions in the coming years, and Congress will face great pressure to spend beyond its means rather than to make difficult decisions about spending priorities. Unless Congress is forced to make the decisions necessary to create a balanced budget, it will always have the all-too-tempting option of shirking this responsibility. The Balanced Budget Constitutional amendment is a common sense approach to ensure that Congress is bound by the same fiscal principles that America's families face each day.

I urge support of this important legislation.

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