

or the yeas and nays are ordered, or if the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Any record vote on the postponed question will be taken later.

PROPOSING A BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 2) proposing a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

The Clerk read the title of the joint resolution.

The text of the joint resolution is as follows:

H.J. RES. 2

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled (two-thirds of each House concurring therein), That the following article is proposed as an amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which shall be valid to all intents and purposes as part of the Constitution when ratified by the legislatures of three-fourths of the several States within seven years after the date of its submission for ratification:

“ARTICLE—

“SECTION 1. Total outlays for any fiscal year shall not exceed total receipts for that fiscal year, unless three-fifths of the whole number of each House of Congress shall provide by law for a specific excess of outlays over receipts by a rollcall vote.

“SECTION 2. The limit on the debt of the United States held by the public shall not be increased, unless three-fifths of the whole number of each House shall provide by law for such an increase by a rollcall vote.

“SECTION 3. Prior to each fiscal year, the President shall transmit to the Congress a proposed budget for the United States Government for that fiscal year in which total outlays do not exceed total receipts.

“SECTION 4. No bill to increase revenue shall become law unless approved by a majority of the whole number of each House by a rollcall vote.

“SECTION 5. The Congress may waive the provisions of this article for any fiscal year in which a declaration of war is in effect. The provisions of this article may be waived for any fiscal year in which the United States is engaged in military conflict which causes an imminent and serious military threat to national security and is so declared by a joint resolution, adopted by a majority of the whole number of each House, which becomes law. Any such waiver must identify and be limited to the specific excess or increase for that fiscal year made necessary by the identified military conflict.

“SECTION 6. The Congress shall enforce and implement this article by appropriate legislation, which may rely on estimates of outlays and receipts.

“SECTION 7. Total receipts shall include all receipts of the United States Government except those derived from borrowing. Total outlays shall include all outlays of the United States Government except for those for repayment of debt principal.

“SECTION 8. This article shall take effect beginning with the fifth fiscal year beginning after its ratification.”

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 2(a) of House Resolution 811, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) and the gentleman from

New York (Mr. NADLER) each will control 2 hours.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia.

□ 1230

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on H.J. Res. 2, currently under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Virginia?

There was no objection.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

March 2, 1995, was a pivotal day in the history of our country. On that day, the United States Senate failed by one vote to send a balanced budget constitutional amendment to the States for ratification. The amendment had passed the House by the required two-thirds majority, and the Senate vote was the last legislative hurdle before ratification by the States.

If Congress had listened to the American people and sent that amendment to the States for ratification, we would not be facing the fiscal crisis we are today. Rather, balancing the Federal budget would have been the norm, instead of the exception, over the past 20 years, and we would have nothing like the annual deficits and skyrocketing debt we currently face.

In 1995, when the balanced budget amendment came within one vote of passing, the gross Federal debt stood at \$4.9 trillion. Today, it stands at over \$20 trillion. The Federal debt held by the public is rising as well and is increasing rapidly as a percentage of the country's economic output. Unlike the past, when the debt spiked to pay for wars of finite duration and then was reduced gradually after hostilities ended, more recently, the debt has risen as a result of having to pay for entitlement programs that are of indefinite duration and difficult to reduce over time.

As John Cogan of the Hoover Institution at Stanford University wrote: “All of the increase in Federal spending relative to GDP over the past seven decades is attributable to entitlement spending. Since the late 1940s, entitlement claims on the Nation's output of goods and services have risen from less than 4 percent to 14 percent. Surprising as it may seem, the share of GDP that is spent on national defense and non-defense discretionary programs combined is no higher today than it was seven decades ago.”

As the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office has observed, such high and rising debt will have serious negative consequences. Interest rates will increase considerably, productivity and wages will be lower, and high debt increases the risk of a financial crisis.

What is particularly troubling is that the debts we are incurring under enti-

tlement programs will burden multiple future generations. Indeed, a few years ago, a cross-national study found that the United States ranked worst among 29 advanced countries in the degree to which it imposes unfair debt burdens on future generations.

University of Virginia philosophy professor Loren Lomasky has written that theorists have devoted considerable attention to injustices committed across lines of race and gender. Far less attended are concerns of intergenerational fairness. That omission is serious. Measures that have done very well by the baby boomers are much less generous to their children and worse still for their grandchildren. The single greatest unsolved problem of justice in the developed world today is transgenerational plunder.

It is time for Congress to stop saddling future generations with the burden of crushing debts to pay for current spending. We should not pass on to our children and grandchildren the bleak fiscal future that our unsustainable spending is creating.

The only way to ensure that Congress acts with fiscal restraint over the longterm is to pass a balanced budget amendment. Experience has proved time and again that Congress cannot for any significant length of time rein in excessive spending. Annual deficits and the resulting debt continue to grow due to political pressures that the Constitution's structure no longer serves to restrain.

In order for Congress to be able to consistently make the tough decisions necessary to sustain fiscal responsibility, Congress must have the external pressure of a balanced budget requirement to force it to do so. Constitutional principle will prevail where political promises have not.

The Framers of the Constitution were familiar with the need for constitutional restrictions on deficit spending. When the Constitution was ratified, it was the States that had exhibited out-of-control fiscal mismanagement by issuing bills of credit to effectively print money to pay for projects and service debt. As a result of that lack of fiscal discipline, Article I, section 10 of the Constitution specifically deprives States of the power to issue bills of credit. Over 200 years later, it is the Federal Government that has proved its inability to adopt sound fiscal policies, and it is now time to adopt a constitutional restraint on Federal fiscal mismanagement.

Several versions of the balanced budget amendment have been introduced this Congress, including two I introduced this Congress, as I have every Congress for the last decade. H.J. Res. 2, the version we are debating today, is nearly identical to the text that passed the House in 1995 and failed in the Senate by one vote. It requires that total annual outlays not exceed total annual receipts. It also requires a true majority of each Chamber to pass tax increases and a three-fifths majority to raise the debt limit.

Today is the day we can turn proposals into legislative action. Our extraordinary fiscal crisis demands an extraordinary solution. We must rise above partisanship and join together to send a balanced budget amendment to the States for ratification.

I urge all my colleagues to join me in supporting this amendment and in freeing our children and grandchildren from the burden of a crippling debt they had no hand in creating so they can be free to chart their own futures for themselves and for their own posterity.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the proposed balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. Specifically, the resolution prohibits total outlays from exceeding total receipts for each fiscal year unless a three-fifths supermajority of the whole membership of each House of Congress votes to override the prohibition. The resolution also requires a three-fifths supermajority of each House in order to raise the Federal debt limit.

There are only two conclusions one can reach about this legislation. Either it is fundamentally unserious—a facade designed to pretend that Republicans, on the heels of a massive Republican tax giveaway to corporations and the very rich that will increase the deficit by at least \$1.5 trillion over the next decade, have a shred of credibility when it comes to claims of fiscal responsibility; or it is deadly serious—the first step toward their ultimate goal of slashing Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, and other critical elements of the social safety net—because you cannot have these enormous tax cuts and balance the budget without slashing spending programs that most Americans depend on.

Understand the context in which we are considering this legislation. White House Budget Director Mick Mulvaney recently admitted that the Republican tax windfall for the rich would cost the Federal Government \$1.8 trillion in revenue over the next decade.

In the wake of their budget-busting tax scam, House Republicans have the nerve to now seek to have us vote on this balanced budget amendment because they want to maintain the illusion that they care about fiscal responsibility. This is the height of hypocrisy.

But if we assume that Republicans actually intend to pass this legislation, we should recognize the catastrophic consequences it would have on senior citizens or the disabled and on low-income people. That is because it would require radical spending cuts to achieve balance, with the principal targets being social safety net programs like Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid that millions of Americans depend on.

I want to commend Mr. GOODLATTE for his honesty. He has spent part of

his speech talking about how we have to cut entitlements.

What are the chief entitlements? Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.

He talks about the lower percentage of expenditures that went for entitlement programs years ago before Medicare and Medicaid were enacted. Of course, we spend more on entitlements now that we have Medicare and Medicaid.

But what is really causing deficits is not Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. It is the Republican tax cuts. In the 1980s, when Ronald Reagan was elected, the total Federal national debt from George Washington through Jimmy Carter was under \$800 billion. Then we had the Reagan tax cuts, and when George Bush left office 12 years later, the national debt had skyrocketed from \$800 billion to \$4.3 trillion. Then we had President Clinton, a Democratic Congress, and Newt Gingrich, who deserves some credit for it too, and we had 3 years of balanced budgets in the late 1990s. In 2000, the projection was for \$5.65 trillion Federal surplus over the next 10 years.

Alan Greenspan, testifying in favor of the Bush tax cuts, said that we have to pass these tax cuts because otherwise we will totally pay off the national debt, and that is a bad thing for various reasons. So we passed the Bush tax cuts—the Republicans did—and between that and funding the Iraq and Afghanistan wars without a tax increase off the credit card, we greatly increased the national debt again.

So the Democrats have come in and cleaned up the messes that Republicans have left on the national debt by their huge tax cuts for the rich, and now they tell us we can't afford Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid because we must keep these tax cuts for the rich going.

This legislation would also undermine the Federal Government's ability to respond to an economic crisis. When the Nation's economy weakens, incomes of individuals and businesses decrease because of job and business losses because of unemployment increasing, which in turn automatically results in reduced tax revenues.

Meanwhile, spending on programs like unemployment insurance benefits and food stamps automatically increases as more people lack jobs and rely on unemployment benefits and food stamps to stay afloat. These programs also help overcome a downward spiral in the economy as they help stabilize the decline in consumer purchasing power and prevent a recession from turning into a depression.

But by requiring a balanced budget, this constitutional amendment would effectively prohibit the government from drawing on these critical stabilizers.

Although the resolution allows Congress to override the amendment's balanced budget mandate, it requires a nearly insurmountable three-fifths supermajority of the entire member-

ship of the House in both Houses. By the time Congress could react to an economic crisis, it would have greatly delayed the stimulating effect of the stabilizers. This legislation would almost guarantee that a recession would become a depression. Meanwhile, millions of Americans who depend on these vital programs for food, shelter, and rent would go without assistance.

In addition to making it harder to avoid an economic crisis, this resolution could actually help to precipitate one. By requiring a three-fifths supermajority vote of each House of Congress to raise the debt limit, H.J. Res. 2 increases the probability that the government will default on its obligations and cause the Nation to spiral into a financial and economic crisis.

Beyond its devastating economic and social consequences, this resolution is also anti-democratic. To the extent that it requires a supermajority to undertake certain steps, such as waiving the balanced budget requirement or raising the debt limit, it shifts power away from the elected Representatives of a majority of the American people to a determined minority that can thwart the majority's will.

Moreover, this bill inappropriately seeks to enshrine into the Constitution one particular economic view that would bind future generations and future Congresses that they elect.

Whatever anyone may think about economic policy and government financing, those kinds of policies should be enacted as legislation that can be modified, amended, or repealed by future majorities, not enshrined in the Constitution to bind future generations to the opinions of this generation. That is fundamentally undemocratic and tyrannical.

Finally, this resolution suffers from a fundamental flaw to its construction. There is no enforcement mechanism, and it is not clear what would happen if Congress ignored it and passed an unbalanced budget without the required supermajority. Presumably, it would somehow be resolved in the Federal courts. We would see judges ordering tax increases, or cuts in Social Security, or revising the transportation budget, you name it, without any legislative guidance, and on what basis they would make such decisions is anyone's guess.

We should not have judges determining inherently political questions regarding budgetary decisions, upending the principle of separation of powers and generating massive litigation over questions ranging from who has the standing to sue, to what remedies a court can impose if it found a violation.

This legislation is ill-conceived and deeply problematic. As I stated earlier, this resolution is either a farce—just for show and a few well-timed press releases—or it is a Trojan horse—an innocuous looking resolution that is really designed to enable the long-held Republican dream of dismantling Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid,

a goal they could never achieve politically but might achieve with a constitutional amendment on the balanced budget. Either way, this resolution is not worthy of this House.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to oppose H.J. Res. 2, and I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1245

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER), a member of the Judiciary Committee and chairman of the Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigations Subcommittee.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, the reason we have a big deficit is not due to a lack of tax revenue; it is due to the fact that Congress spends too much money.

Now, let me repeat that. The deficit and the debt are not caused by a lack of tax revenue. It is because there is too much money that is authorized and spent right here in the Congress of the United States.

This proposed constitutional amendment will give us the discipline that we have not had, as we have sat and watched the deficit go up and up and up and up and away. It is the responsibility of Presidents of both political parties that this has happened, and maybe it is time for us to tell colleagues now and in the future and Presidents now and in the future that the time to put things on the cuff is at an end.

I would say that doing what we have done, which means spending money on ourselves and sending the bill plus interest to the next generations, is bad economics. But it is also immoral.

Now, I have a grandson who is a little bit more than a year old, and unless Congress stops doing this, he is going to end up having a debt that will boggle the mind that he and his contemporaries are going to have difficulty meeting.

So what do we need to do?

Number one, we need to stop passing bloated omnibus bills. I voted “no” proudly on the omnibus bill, which busted the budget and added to the debt.

We need to start getting honest about the fact that entitlement programs are spiraling out of control. And that doesn’t mean cutting entitlement programs for existing people; it means slowing down their growth rate.

But that is something that nice people aren’t supposed to talk about, particularly here in Congress. But it is something that is necessary if those entitlement programs are going to be worth anything for future generations when they may need them rather than dealing with the present generation.

Now, I know we can all count up votes, and people vote now and we are not going to be running in the future. But the time has come to think about the future, and that is why this constitutional amendment ought to be passed.

Congress can’t discipline itself. The only thing that can discipline us is saying what Congress can’t do in the United States Constitution, just like the First and Second Amendments.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. JEFFRIES).

Mr. JEFFRIES. Mr. Speaker, the so-called balanced budget amendment is nothing but a phony, fraudulent, and fake effort to promote fiscal responsibility.

I am perplexed by the notion that my good friends on the other side of the aisle would come to the House floor to lecture the American people about the budget when their actions are primarily responsible for the situation in which we find ourselves.

How did we arrive at a moment where, in this country, we confront a crippling \$20 trillion debt when the Clinton administration handed the Bush administration a budget surplus?

I am glad you asked that question.

Number one, a failed war in Iraq, brought to us by a Republican administration;

Number two, an unnecessarily prolonged conflict in Afghanistan, brought to us by a Republican administration;

Number three, the Bush tax giveaways of 2001, brought to us by a Republican House, a Republican Senate, and a Republican President;

Number four, the 2003 Bush tax giveaway, brought to us by a Republican House, a Republican Senate, and a Republican President;

Number five, the collapse of the economy in 2008, brought to us by Republican-inspired financial deregulation;

Number six, the Republican tax scam of 2017 that will explode our debt by an additional \$2 trillion.

Republicans burn down our fiscal house and then show up with a so-called balanced budget amendment and act like the volunteer fire department.

I am from Brooklyn. I know a hustle when I see one. We will not allow anyone to balance the budget on the backs of working families, middle class folks, senior citizens, the poor, the sick, the afflicted, veterans, and rural America. We will not allow anyone to devastate Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.

The American people deserve a better deal.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SMITH), a member of the Judiciary Committee and chairman of the Science, Space, and Technology Committee.

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Mr. Speaker, first of all, I thank the gentleman from Virginia, the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, for yielding me time and also for his tireless efforts over the years to pass a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution.

Mr. Speaker, today the House of Representatives votes to protect future generations from our debilitating debt.

Thomas Jefferson believed that “the public debt is the greatest of dangers to be feared.” He wished “it were possible to obtain a single amendment to our Constitution taking from the Federal Government the power of borrowing.”

It is past time that we listen to Jefferson’s commonsense advice. American families balance their checkbooks. States and local governments balance their budgets. So should the Federal Government.

The last balanced budget occurred in the 1990s. The previous balanced budget was during the Eisenhower administration. Surely it is not too much to ask that we take a major step towards having a balanced budget in our future.

Mr. Speaker, only a balanced budget amendment will guarantee that the Federal Government puts its fiscal house in order and keeps it that way.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. DELANEY).

Mr. DELANEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to the balanced budget amendment, which, in my judgment, is one of the worst pieces of legislation I have seen since I have been in the Congress.

First, it will act as a doomsday machine, destroying critical programs like Social Security, Medicare, investments in our infrastructure, investments in science and research, and investments in our military.

Second, it represents wrongheaded economics. To manage the country with a zero deficit is not smart economic policy.

Third, it is being presented to the American people in a deceitful manner. To compare fiscal planning of the U.S. Government to how hardworking families in this country should manage their own personal finances is misrepresenting how we should think about our government.

And fourth, it is being done entirely for political reasons: to direct attention away from tax legislation that has materially increased the deficit of this country.

If we wanted to have an honest conversation about the fiscal situation of this country, which is terrible and projected to be worse, we would focus on three numbers: The first number we would focus on, or the first percentage, is our debt as a percentage of our economy; the second ratio we would focus on is how much we think our economy could grow each year; and the third number we would focus on is the percentage of our deficit as expressed relative to our economy.

If we actually wanted to work together, if the majority and the minority wanted to work together and put together a fiscal plan for this country that was responsible, that represented smart economics, allowed us to invest in our country, and put us on a trajectory where the debt, as a percentage of our economy, would go down over time and return to normal levels, then we

would be talking about how do we come up with a budget that had deficits on an annual basis of minus 1.5 to 2 percent.

That wouldn't put us in a position where we have to slash so many important government programs because this government has insufficient tax revenues. In fact, our tax revenues are the lowest as a percentage of our economy that they have been in 50 years.

But if we actually wanted to have a real conversation about putting this country on an appropriate kind of long-term fiscal trajectory, we would work towards 2 percent deficits. Because if, in fact, our economy could grow at 2.5 percent a year, then, by definition, the debt as a percentage of our economy would go down; and it would go down by setting realistic goals that don't represent inappropriate cuts to core government programs like Medicare and Social Security and our defense spending and our investment in our country, in our kids, in our infrastructure, and in our research.

That would be a conversation that represents smart economic policy. It would be an honest conversation with the American people. It wouldn't be done for political reasons, and it would materially improve the fiscal trajectory of this country.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING), a member of the Judiciary Committee.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I first want to thank the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Mr. GOODLATTE, for leading on this constitutional amendment for a balanced budget. We have fought this out in past years and brought this to the floor a couple of times that I can remember here.

But I would like to dial back your memory, Mr. Speaker, to 1998, when the House of Representatives did pass a balanced budget amendment to our United States Constitution and sent it over to the United States Senate. And late in the year of 1998, after a hard-fought whip team pulled the votes together, they put together the two-thirds votes necessary in the Senate to pass that constitutional amendment for a balanced budget off to the States for ratification in three-quarters of the States.

They had the votes, and at the last minute, one Senator walked down and, in dramatic fashion, voted "no" when he was on the whip card expected to vote "yes." And that is what blocked a balanced budget amendment in 1998, within one vote, because I think all of us here are confident that the States would have ratified a balanced budget amendment, and then we would be living under the balanced budget amendment from sometime, probably pretty near the turn of the millennium, around the year 2000.

Think what a difference it would be today. This Nation might have a little debt left, but it would be a shrinking

debt because, whenever you balance the budget, if it's balanced, you are always going to end up with a little black because the pencil doesn't work quite that precisely.

We missed that window. We have the window now in this year, in our time, and we have an obligation to pass this balanced budget amendment.

When I came here in 2003, we were at balance as far as the spending was concerned, but not with the budget that was approved. I asked the Budget Committee chairman: Where is our balanced budget amendment?

He said: We can't balance the budget. We are at war. We have been attacked in New York and in the Pentagon and in Pennsylvania, and we have to set up TSA and spend all this money, and it is impossible to balance the budget.

I said: It can't be impossible.

I set about writing a balanced budget myself, as a freshman, in the first weeks here. I wasn't prepared to do that at that time. But had we gotten that done, had we tightened our belt, had we implemented the kind of discipline this constitutional amendment before us today will bring about, we wouldn't be talking about debt and deficit. We wouldn't be talking about 107 million Americans not in the workforce because they are of age but they are being tempted to stay home on the couch with more than 70 different means-tested Federal welfare programs.

We haven't demonstrated the discipline. If interest should increase by 1 percent, that is \$200 billion a year. And if that goes up and up, we are, pretty soon, collapsed in an untenable situation with our spending. We need to make this decision in our time, force this discipline on this Congress, and we need to focus, also, on what failed the last time in 1998.

One vote has now accumulated to over \$20 trillion in national debt, falling short one vote in the United States Senate. Let's not fall short here today. Let's send this over to the Senate. Let's send the message to America.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE).

Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member for yielding me this time.

Last week when I saw the vote calendar for this week and I saw on it was a schedule to vote on the balanced budget amendment, I actually laughed out loud. I assumed that it was surely a joke, because there is no way the Republican majority, just a few months after voting for a \$1.9 trillion tax cut that would add more to the national debt than any other single vote in my lifetime, surely they wouldn't have the nerve to come back a few months later and, with a straight face, be pushing a balanced budget amendment. Yet it turns out it wasn't a joke. Here we are.

□ 1300

Mr. Speaker, my fellow Americans, this is part of a two-pronged attack.

Part one of that two-pronged attack was the \$1.9 trillion tax cut—83 percent of which goes to the richest 1 percent. Part two is to stand up here and say: Oh, my goodness, we suddenly have a debt problem. It must be because we are spending too much. And part two calls for pushing through a draconian bill that would mandate trillions of dollars of cuts to Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, CHIP, veterans programs, and other critical spending.

Here are the statistics. Under this legislation, by 2028, \$2.6 trillion would be cut from Social Security; \$1.7 trillion cut from Medicare; \$1.2 trillion cut from Medicaid, CHIP and the ACA; and finally, \$250 billion cut from veterans disability.

We cannot afford these draconian cuts. We must stand up and reject this laughable attempt to simply push through the largest cuts in American history. We must say "no."

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BABIN).

Mr. BABIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the constitutional balanced budget amendment. My constituents sent me to Washington to lower taxes, strengthen our economy, and to cut Federal spending. We have made some progress on the first two, but we have a lot of work to do on the third.

We have passed historic tax cut legislation, which is stimulating job creation and economic growth, raising wages, and allowing the American people to keep more of what is in their paycheck. The unemployment rate has remained low, and over 200,000 new manufacturing jobs have been created in the past 15 months. That is all good news for America's future.

Unfortunately, Washington has an addiction to spending money that it doesn't have, accumulating a national debt of now more than \$20 trillion. That is four times more debt than in 1995 when Washington fell one vote short of passing a balanced budget amendment. Politicians in Washington told the American people that Congress could balance the budget on their own and they didn't need a constitutional amendment. That was flat out wrong.

Unless Washington is forced to rein in spending through the discipline of a constitutional amendment, it will never balance the budget. If there is any doubt, simply look at last month's omnibus spending bill, which I voted against. That bill is exhibit A in the case for a balanced budget amendment.

Our national debt undermines our economy and our national security. Washington has a moral obligation to balance its budget. Our amendment gives Washington the discipline that it lacks by ensuring that Congress cannot spend more money than it takes in.

This resolution asks Congress to make the same tough questions and decisions about its budget that the American households and small businesses make every single day. We owe it to

our children and our grandchildren, so let's pass this resolution as a first step toward financial discipline.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS).

Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed bureaucratic approach of the balanced budget amendment says nothing about our national priorities, about what to do about massive and growing economic inequality, about addressing the impact of globalization on the American people.

It says nothing about infrastructure for sustainable energy, water, transportation, communication, health, education, housing, the opioid epidemic, climate change, or Social Security. It says nothing about addressing the great inequities facing women, African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, the LGBTQ community, the disabled, or the homeless.

The balanced budget amendment would wipe out trillions of dollars of Social Security, Medicare, military and civil service retirement trust funds, and the FDIC and Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation trust funds.

At a time when our Nation may be heading for a constitutional crisis because Congress is unable to find a simple majority for legislative guarantees, guaranteeing that no one man is above the law, a balanced budget amendment would create an ongoing scenario of endless potential constitutional crises should Congress be unable to find supermajorities to resolve budget shortfalls, creating the threat of political extortion by a congressional minority. The balanced budget amendment is a direct attack on our citizens and our democracy.

Mr. Speaker, let us end this facade of reality and vote down this assault on real government.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BARTON).

(Mr. BARTON asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BARTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman of the Judiciary Committee.

Mr. Speaker, almost 34 years ago, in January 1995, I stood right over there, held up my right hand with my 2-year-old daughter, Kristin, took an oath to defend this country and this Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic. And as soon as I had taken the oath of office to be a Member of the House of Representatives, I walked over to the hopper and put in the Barton tax limitation balanced budget amendment. It was H.J. Res. 33, I believe. That was almost 34 years ago.

At that time, the national debt was less than \$2 trillion. Today, it is over \$20 trillion. In the time that I have been in the House, we have had three or four balanced budgets on a cash flow

basis, so that means we have had 30 unbalanced budgets. We have piled almost \$19 trillion on our children and our grandchildren's backs with no hope to ever repay.

The balanced budget constitutional amendment is not a panacea. It doesn't solve all of our problems, but it is a step in the right direction.

I have a few issues with this particular balanced budget amendment. It is not as strong as I would like it to be, but I commend the chairman of the Judiciary Committee for bringing it to the floor for a vote. It is a positive first step.

It is not compassionate, Mr. Speaker, to spend money we don't have and keep adding deficits that we will never repay. There is always an inexhaustible demand for more Federal dollars. At some point in time, we have to start the process of living within our means and, believe it or not, repaying what we have already borrowed.

This constitutional amendment, again, it is not perfect, but it is a step in the right direction. I urge its passage by a two-thirds vote to send it to the Senate, hopefully, for a similar two-thirds vote.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. TORRES).

Mrs. TORRES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition of the so-called balanced budget amendment. Like so many Americans who have been following the budget process, I am too very disappointed with this Congress. The budget is the value statement by which we govern America.

The amendment before us and the recent massive cuts passed by Republicans are far from a reflection of those values. That tax bill added yet another \$1 trillion of debt to our children's pocketbooks. And for what? So millionaires could get a tax cut 70 times larger than what the middle class received? The vote we take today will pay for that tax cut by cutting programs the middle class depends on.

As a mother and grandmother, I have to ask: What kind of future are we leaving for our families? You cannot hand millions of dollars to millionaires and corporations one day while pretending to be concerned about our budget deficit the next. That doesn't make you a fiscal hawk.

That is why the Congressional Hispanic Caucus has been working on a plan to get us back on track, and I am proud to help lead those efforts as the chair of the Budget Task Force. In this role, I am pushing for solutions that promote the well-being and strength of our local communities. Sure, we all want a balanced budget. This vote today is not a solution. It is an attack on the middle class families we represent.

As a former mayor and a State legislator, I know firsthand the difference between a true balanced budget and what that means for securing the resources and services our States and cit-

ies need. It has long been my priority to ensure healthcare remains accessible for everyone, especially the most vulnerable in our communities. We can't do that if we are making enormous cuts to Medicare, to Medicaid, to Social Security programs our very low-income families, individuals with disabilities, seniors, and veterans depend on for their livelihoods.

More than 50 million Americans depend on Medicare. Many of them make less than \$24,000 a year. The Nation's seniors have worked their whole lives and contributed to the Social Security program. It is not a gift to them.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT), a member of the Judiciary Committee and chairman of the Small Business Committee.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman GOODLATTE for his long-time commitment to this very, very important issue, passing a balanced budget amendment for our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, with the national debt exceeding \$20 trillion, it is long past time that we take necessary steps to restore fiscal responsibility to the budget process. Too often, spending bills are passed by adding to the deficit rather than balancing the budget and helping to pay down our national debt. It is time to reverse that mentality.

One of the greatest disappointments that I have experienced in my 22 years in Congress happened when we passed a balanced budget amendment in the House by the required two-thirds votes, but the effort failed in the Senate by just one vote, and a number of Members from the House went down to the Senate to personally watch that vote and stare those Senators in the eye, and it was such a disappointment because we all knew then how important this was to our country.

And here we are, 20-plus years later, and the debt has gone up far more than any of us thought even possible at that time. Had the balanced budget amendment passed back then, our debt today certainly would be lower, much lower.

The American people sent us here to make the difficult decisions necessary to balance the budget and to live within our means. Just as the American people have to do, every family has to balance their budget every week or every month, and they can't spend more than they take in or they end up going bankrupt. Our Federal Government is basically bankrupt, but since we print money here, we are able to go on. But that harms the American people. It harms our economy. We have got to do something about it.

We cannot continue to just hope that we pass a balanced budget. It has become increasingly obvious over the years that the only way to ensure a balanced budget is to mandate, to require that Congress pass one, and that is what we are considering today.

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Passage of the balanced budget amendment is the only thing that we

can do to make certain that we, and future Congresses, rein in the out-of-control spending and restore fiscal sanity to Washington.

The resolution offered by Chairman GOODLATTE today takes the necessary steps to ensure that for any fiscal year, total outlays—what we spend—do not exceed total receipts—what we take in. Our Nation cannot continue to spend money that it doesn't have.

Let's end the borrow-and-spend mentality that created our staggering national debt—over \$20 trillion—and put our Nation on a sustainable path by requiring that a balanced budget be enacted every year.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this measure.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigations and a member of the Judiciary Committee.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I think it is important for those of us who have served here that we are down this frivolous route again: this unconstitutional effort to remedy the disaster that has been perpetrated by the Republican tax scam.

Let me tell you what the CBO Director said, who is known to be the bipartisan, nonpartisan arbiter of the work that the Congress does.

First of all, they say the tax cut will create deficits of historic proportions. Not Medicaid or Medicare or Social Security. An \$800 billion deficit in 2018, \$1 trillion in 2019, and \$1 trillion in 2020. That is what the Republicans have created.

Now, in this false and ridiculous, possibly unconstitutional effort, here we go again with a balanced budget amendment that will, in fact, deny and implode the needs of those who need Medicare, Social Security, and Medicaid.

This balanced budget amendment is antidemocratic in that it requires a supermajority in Congress to increase the debt limit, deficit spending, or raise revenue. All would have been unnecessary if we had not passed the tax scam. Remember, we gave the corporate tax relief a 21 percent number, instead of 25 percent, coming from 33 percent, when they didn't ask for it.

It is antidemocratic because it enshrines one particular economic theory into the Constitution: depriving future voters and future Congresses of the ability to adopt other economic approaches. That is our responsibility as leaders giving oversight to the needs of the American people, to the needs of the Pentagon, and to the needs of domestic spending.

By the way, this deficit will be more than domestic spending and defense spending. It raises separation of powers concerns because it would open the door to allowing Federal courts to make budget policy decisions. It is eco-

nomically harmful because it would hamper the ability of Congress to respond to economic downturns and other emergencies.

Were anyone here in 2007 and 2008, particularly when the Secretary of the Treasury under the Bush administration came and told this Democratic Congress, of which I was a Member of, that America, as we knew it, was getting ready to end, that we saw the demise of Lehman Brothers and the collapse of the market, it wasn't Democrats who did that, it was Republicans. It is economically harmful because it would hamper the ability again for us to deal with those kinds of downturns.

It jeopardizes funding of Social Security and the military and civil service retirement system, and it undermines the Nation's financial system, including deposit insurance. It is unnecessary because Congress was able to achieve a balanced budget in the 1990s, of which I was here through the existing political process, and created the Children's Health Insurance Program.

Therefore, this balanced budget amendment is an amendment that creates havoc. What we should do is to undo the tax scam, repeal it, start again, and not implode Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. To the seniors who are living there: don't buy into a balanced budget amendment which is unconstitutional, buy into repealing the tax scam and standing for the American people.

I conclude by saying many national groups oppose this.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to H.J. Res. 2, the so-called Balanced Budget Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which properly should be called the "Cut, Cap, and End Medicare and Destroy Social Security Act" because this is exactly what will happen if this amendment is passed by Congress and ratified by three-fourths of the several states.

A balanced budget amendment is a perennial gimmick periodically dusted off by House Republicans to divert attention from their manifest inability to govern competently or to manage the nation's finances.

H.J. Res. 2 is no exception coming as it does on the heels of the report by the Congressional Budget Office documenting that the Trump/GOP budget deficit continues to climb and is projected to exceed \$800 billion this year and to top \$1 trillion next year and to remain at that level for foreseeable future.

Moreover, the CBO report confirms that the GOP TaxScam passed last year by this Republican Congress on a party-line vote will not pay for itself and is in fact the major cause of the rising the deficit.

Mr. Speaker, if our friends across the aisle really want to shrink the deficit, reduce the national debt, practice fiscal responsibility, and bring about sustained economic growth and prosperity, there is a much better, easier, and more certain way to achieve these goals than by tampering with the U.S. Constitution.

The easier and better way is for the American people to put a Democrat in the White House and Democratic majorities in the House and Senate.

In the 1990s under the leadership of President Clinton the budget was balanced for four

consecutive years, the national debt was paid down, the national debt, 23 million new jobs were created, and projected surpluses exceeded \$5 trillion.

Under President Obama the financial crisis and economic meltdown inherited from his Republican predecessor was ended, the annual deficit was reduced by 67 percent, the auto industry was saved from collapse, and 15 million jobs were created.

In contrast, under every Republican administration since President Reagan the size of the deficit bequeathed to his successor was substantially larger than the one he inherited, a major economic recession occurred, and economic growth was lower than the.

Turning to the joint resolution before us, I strongly oppose this latest gimmick for the following reasons:

1. it is anti-democratic in that it requires a supermajority in Congress to increase the debt limit, deficit spending, or raise revenue;

2. it is anti-democratic because it enshrines one particular economic theory into the Constitution, depriving future voters and future Congresses of the ability to adopt other economic approaches;

3. it raises separation of powers concerns because it would open the door to allowing federal courts to make budget policy decisions;

4. it is economically harmful because it would hamper the ability of Congress to respond to economic downturns and other emergencies;

5. it jeopardizes funding for Social Security and military and civil service retirement systems;

6. it undermines the nation's financial system, including deposit insurance; and

7. it is unnecessary because Congress was able to achieve balanced budgets in the 1990's through the existing political process.

It is for these reasons that numerous outside groups committed to the economic well-being of the United States as well as organizations concerned with the needs of the elderly, the middle class, children, and other basic needs of national importance strongly opposed a measure in the 112th Congress virtually identical to Chairman GOODLATTE's current H.J. Res. 2, and that measure failed to garner a supermajority as required by the Constitution.

These groups included a coalition of 123 religious, labor, education, civil rights, child advocacy, and other organizations; a coalition of six national environmental organizations representing over one million members and activists; OMB Watch (now the Center for Effective Government); the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO); the Service Employees International Union (SEIU); the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME); the National Education Association (NEA); the National Women's Law Center, Committee for Education Funding, and the Coalition on Human Needs.

Although there is a clear need to lower the long-term federal budget deficit, requiring a balanced budget through a constitutional amendment would be disastrous for the U.S. economy.

This Amendment is portrayed as the alternative to our country's deficit issue, but in reality, a Balanced Budget Amendment truly undermines the goal of a balanced budget by

threatening the survival of such critical programs as Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid that serve as fundamental safety nets for millions of Americans.

These important social programs face greater demand when federal receipts are in rapid declines.

Requiring a balanced budget would force cuts to these and other important programs or force tax increases.

Either prescription would risk tipping a faltering economy into recession or making recession worse.

Any constitutional balanced budget amendment would limit the ability of the federal government to make important investments in worthy causes, including crucial public safety and homeland security programs.

Even at times of fiscal austerity, we must continue to provide for the country's public safety and homeland security needs.

Any constitutional balanced budget amendment would grossly undermine the ability to protect the lives and well-being of Americans nationwide.

Further, this Amendment will gridlock Congress during an economic downturn.

There has never been such a blatant effort to ransom the American economy in order to extort from the American public.

While I support bipartisan efforts to increase the debt limit and to resolve our differences over budgetary revenue and spending issues, I cannot support a bill that unduly robs average Americans of their economic security and ability to provide for their families, while constraining the ability of the Congress to deal effectively with America's economic, fiscal, and job creation challenges.

We need to change the tone here in the Congress.

There has been a theme in previous Congresses and in this Congress of focusing on cutting programs that benefit those who need it most, while ignoring the need to focus on real and contemporary job creation and economic recovery.

And by real and contemporary job creation, I do not mean Trump's unsubstantiated and impossible promise of coal jobs.

The creation of coal jobs is one of the many myths and false hopes peddled by the current White House.

The promise that jobs in coal are just around the corner is fake news.

Our time could be better spent focusing on ways to increase American jobs, growing our economy, and investing in our people, paying our bills, and resolving our differences.

That is the way you make and keep America great.

A balanced budget is not something that should be mandated in our Constitution, nor is it something that should be required every year, proposing an idea that offers little guarantee of success.

In particular, during economic downturns, the government can stimulate growth by cutting taxes and increasing spending.

And in fact, the cost of many government benefit programs is designed to automatically increase when the economy is down—for example, costs for food stamps (SNAP) and Medicaid increase when more people need to rely upon them.

These countercyclical measures lessen the impact of job losses and economic hardship associated with economic downturns.

The resulting temporary increases in spending could cause deficits that would trigger the balanced budget requirements at the worst possible moment.

A constitutional amendment requiring the Congress to cut spending to match revenue every year would both limit the Congress's ability to respond to changing fiscal conditions and would dramatically impede federal responses to high unemployment as well as federal guarantees for food and medical assistance.

As with the outlay cap that a Balanced Budget Amendment would bring, tying outlays to a percentage of GDP would impose arbitrary limits on government actions to respond to an economic slowdown or recession, when GDP declines.

Cutting spending during a recession could make a recession worse by increasing the number of unemployed, decreasing business investment, and withholding services needed to jump-start the economy.

The proposed Balanced Budget Amendment would render Social Security unconstitutional in its current form due to the Amendment's prohibitive stance on that system of spending.

Capping future spending below Reagan-era levels would force devastating cuts to Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, Head Start, child care, Pell grants, and many other critical programs.

Because this proposal would make it impossible for the Congress to increase revenues rather than to cut spending, it is virtually a political ploy that reflects the Republican priorities of ending the Medicare guarantee while cutting taxes for millionaires.

The need to raise the debt ceiling has no correlation to whether future budgets are balanced; increases in the debt ceiling reflect past decisions on fiscal policy.

And as demonstrated by current disagreement about whether and when to raise the debt ceiling, Congress does not need to impose further barriers to its consideration.

Treasury has warned that failing to raise the debt ceiling and the resulting government default, which would be unprecedented, would have catastrophic impacts on the economy.

Interest rates would rise, increasing costs for the government and for American businesses and families.

Any cuts made to accommodate a mandated balanced budget would fall most heavily on domestic discretionary programs; the immediate result of a balanced budget amendment would be devastating cuts in education, homeland security, public safety, health care and research, transportation and other vital services.

Under H.J. Res. 2 total funding would be cut for non-defense discretionary programs, including veterans' medical care, most homeland security activities, border protection, and the FBI.

Therefore, these cuts will impact funds to protect our nation's food and water supply, environmental protections, medical research, education, and services for disadvantaged or abused children, frail elderly people, and people with severe disabilities.

The Founders purposely made the Constitutional amendment process a long and arduous one.

It is foolish, reckless, and decidedly not conservative to rush to pass an amendment altering our nation's founding document on such

short notice and without reasonable time for debate.

Republicans who support this proposed amendment to the Constitution have demonstrated, at this critical juncture in American history, that they are profoundly irresponsible when it comes to the integrity of our economy and utterly bereft of sensible solutions for fixing it.

Medicare covers a population with diverse needs and circumstances.

Most people with Medicare live on modest incomes.

While many many beneficiaries enjoy good health, 25 percent or more have serious health problems and live with multiple chronic conditions, including cognitive and functional impairments.

Today, 43 percent of all Medicare beneficiaries are between 65 and 74 years old and 12 percent are 85 or older.

Those who are 85 or older are the fastest-growing age group among elderly Medicare beneficiaries.

With the aging and growth of the population, the number of Medicare beneficiaries more than doubled between 1966 and 2000 and is projected to grow from 45 million today to 79 million in 2030.

For these reasons, I am strongly opposed to despoiling the Constitution by even considering the Republicans' latest Balanced Budget Amendment gimmick.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE), the chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.J. Res. 2, proposing a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution of the United States. And I want to thank Chairman GOODLATTE for the incredible work he has done on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, families across America have to balance their budgets, and it is time Washington does the same thing. I was the mayor of my local city before I came here: six balanced budgets with surpluses each and every year. Forty-eight States, including my home State of Tennessee, require a balanced budget by law.

What makes Washington any different?

Members of Congress are required to balance their office budgets or pay for any overages themselves. Guess what, Mr. Speaker? 435 balanced budgets.

The rhetoric we hear from the other side is that the reason we have magic budget deficits is tax cuts. Let's talk about an inconvenient truth: revenues collected by the Federal Government have never been higher in the history of this country. Revenue has increased nearly 8 percent annually over the last 7 years. And, Mr. Speaker, the Federal Government doesn't need to spend 8 percent more revenue each and every year. What we need to do is rein in our spending. Spending is the problem.

The other point we have heard is that the recent omnibus spending bill is another sign that Congress lacks seriousness about addressing spending. Well, discretionary spending has been growing in at or about 2.4 percent over the last

14 years annualized. That is a lot more than many of us would like, but we basically have held this spending in check.

The problem is our ballooning mandatory programs that account for 70 cents of every dollar we spend annually is a problem. Mandatory spending, which includes pensions, food stamps, Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, and others is growing at 7½ percent per year. Medicare and Social Security both face a crisis in the not-too-distant future, and Congress has to make hard choices about how to secure these programs for future generations. I am convinced, however, that the only way Congress will make those hard choices is if we are forced to.

Both parties bear responsibility for our annual budget deficits, but people have a choice here today. The last time we had a chance to vote on a similar resolution was 2011, and the only thing that has changed since then is that our debt and deficit have exploded further. It is time that we, in Congress, make the hard decision and require Washington to abide by the same budget before it is too late and we can't right the ship: the same thing that families do every single week and month of the year.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support H.J. Res. 2, and I encourage all of my colleagues to do the same and help start the process of bringing some fiscal responsibility back to Washington.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JOHNSON), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Courts, Intellectual Property, and the Internet.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, no one in their right mind should be supporting this cynical and hypocritical Republican balanced budget amendment. This resolution has been rushed to the floor today without a single committee hearing.

The don't-tax-but-spend Republicans just exploded the national debt. They exploded this national debt by nearly \$2 trillion with the tax scam-tax cut bill that dished out a \$5.5 trillion gift to big multinational corporations and to the top 1 percent crowd: \$5.5 trillion. Now they come back dumping, like a wheelbarrow full of horse manure, a radical balanced budget amendment onto this House floor today.

The Washington Post said that this is like Donald Trump proposing to lead a campaign to make adultery illegal. I agree with that assessment.

After passing their \$5.5 trillion tax cut, and after passage of the omnibus spending bill that exploded the national debt, the don't-tax-but-spend Republicans are now shamelessly demanding that needy seniors sacrifice their retirement security to pay for the shameful tax giveaway to the greedy.

And that is not all. Just this week, the CBO released a report forecasting annual deficits of \$1 trillion or more every single year that President Trump remains in office.

This Republican hypocrisy has got to stop.

Republican fiscal strategy has three goals: one, cut taxes for the wealthy; two, keep up the charade that they are fiscally responsible; and, three, and above all, they want to cut the social safety net. They want to cut programs like Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and food stamps, all to pay for their handouts to those who already have plenty.

Enough is enough.

The American people cannot afford Republicans' fiscal hypocrisy any longer.

Democrats will continue to fight for a better deal for working people in America: policies that create good-paying jobs, reduce the deficit, and grow the economy for everyone. Americans deserve a better deal. They deserve better jobs, better wages, and a better future.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LOUDERMILK).

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for the time.

Let's make no mistake today. The only reason that we are here, today, talking about an amendment to the Constitution to force Congress to balance a budget is because of the lack of fiscal responsibility of this body over the past several years.

Throughout the history of the United States, the United States has gone into debt during times of national crisis or war, but both parties understood the danger to our national security and our economy by sustaining a debt and, therefore, worked together to pay off that debt. But not in the modern era of Congress, no. We continue to print money, and we continue to go deeper and deeper into debt.

Make no mistake, the American people understand that this enormous debt that we have accrued in this country of \$21 trillion is a responsibility of Congress, and it is our responsibility to fix this problem. Now, a lot of people don't understand how much money \$21 trillion really is. That is part of the problem. Our debt is so big that no one really understands how big this debt is. Let me put it into perspective.

Regardless of your background or your religious beliefs, if you know what today's date is, you know historically when Jesus was born. If you were to go back to the moment that Jesus was born and put \$17,000 into the bank, and you waited 60 seconds and put another \$17,000 into the bank, you waited another 60 seconds and deposited another \$17,000 into the bank, and you continued to put \$17,000 into the bank every minute since Jesus was born, you still wouldn't have enough money to pay off our national debt today, and that is an atrocity to the American people.

There is one way to fix this. We can either pass this amendment and have it ratified, or we can actually have the fortitude to pass a balanced budget.

The Republican Study Committee will bring to this floor a balanced budget, as we have many times in the past. And if my colleagues who are calling us hypocrites are serious about balancing this budget, then they will come together and vote for a budget that balanced. We have the authority, we have the power to do that, it is just we don't have the fortitude or willingness to do what is hard. We owe it to our grandchildren, and we owe it to our children.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. JUDY CHU).

Ms. JUDY CHU of California. Mr. Speaker, after years of irresponsibly adding to our national debt in order to make the rich richer, Republicans are now trying to con the American people with this insidious and insincere balanced budget amendment.

I say insincere because Republicans have been the greatest contributors to our national debt. They eagerly supported and even extended President Bush's 2001 tax cuts, which added more than \$5 trillion to the deficit over 10 years. And at the start of this Congress, they rushed headlong into another \$2.3 trillion tax scam that the Congressional Budget Office says will put our deficit over \$1 trillion within just 2 years.

And what do the American people get for all of that? Very little, if you are not already rich, since 80 percent of that \$2.3 trillion goes straight to the top 1 percent.

□ 1330

Here is why I say this is insidious. First, they pass a Robin Hood tax scam that robs the coffers and gives it to the wealthiest, then they use that debt that they themselves created to justify draconian cuts to the vast majority of Americans who are not millionaires.

In his budget, President Trump proposed cuts of \$1.4 trillion from Medicaid, \$500 billion from Medicare, \$65 billion from Social Security.

Fortunately, Democrats blocked these cuts, but if this amendment passes, look out, America. The programs you depend on will be pillaged to pay for the Republican tax cuts, despite our warnings that it would result in exactly this situation.

In fact, the latest Center on Budget and Policy report said that the cuts mandated by this amendment would result in Social Security being cut by \$325 billion in 2025 alone.

On seeing the CBO's deficit report, Senator BOB CORKER, referencing the tax scam, said: "It could be one of the worst votes I have ever made."

Well, we tried to warn you, but now the American people shouldn't be the ones to pay for the mistake.

If Republicans want to balance the budget, there is nothing stopping them. It is time that we stop the tax scam.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. MITCHELL).

Mr. MITCHELL. Mr. Speaker, my home State of Michigan requires a balanced annual budget. We actually have

a rainy day fund. A rainy day fund will ensure when tax revenues fall because of the economy, we can pay our costs to run the government.

Every household needs to balance its budget and live within its means. Imagine that. A novel concept. This Federal Government should do the same thing.

Mr. Speaker, the current U.S. national debt has topped \$21 trillion. We could make a big stack of that here. I am not sure we could count that high or have the time to do it today. We are coming to the edge of a fiscal crisis, unless we take aggressive steps to rein in our debt, our spending.

I spent 35 years in business. I full well know that in order to be successful, you can't just spend whatever you think you need and hope it all works out.

I have heard colleagues on the other side of the aisle say, "What? We brought this to the floor without hearings?"

We need to have hearings about not spending more than we have? I can't imagine that. Think about that.

We talk about if we actually reduce our spending, we are going to pillage programs? On the other side of the aisle, they talk about just increase taxes.

I went to the school of economics and public policy. The reality is, look at what has happened in Greece and other countries. You can't, by raising taxes, simply think you are going to get more revenue. In fact, it goes someplace else frequently. The answer is not spend yourself into oblivion and hope to raise taxes.

That is why I stand here today in full support of H.J. Res. 2, the balanced budget amendment. I cosponsored it, I support it. It brings needed financial discipline to this Congress, because it is abundantly clear to me in 16 months here, we are unable to control our spending unless someone puts the reins on us, puts us, frankly, in handcuffs, because we find a way to spend more money than we ever hope to have.

It is time to stop. We owe it to the American people, we owe it to our children and grandchildren; otherwise, frankly, we are going to shackle them to debt for their entire lives.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 15 seconds just to set the record straight.

We did indeed hold a hearing on the balanced budget amendment. I do agree with the gentleman from Michigan that the obvious was stated in that hearing, but a hearing was indeed held.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I would note that most households do not balance their budgets. They borrow to buy the car, they borrow for the mortgage, and if they didn't do that, they wouldn't have a car or a mortgage.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ).

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to this balanced budget amendment.

Just a few months ago, Republicans plunged this Nation nearly \$2 trillion deeper into debt with a tax scam bill that gave massive handouts to corporations and the ultra wealthy.

Another trip down memory lane reminds us that Republicans care so much about balancing our budget, that one of the first things that they did upon taking the majority back in 2010 was repealing paygo rules that required Congress to pay for our spending.

What better way to cover up yesterday's fiscal malfeasance than to hide behind a cynical and hypocritical promise to be more fiscally responsible tomorrow?

There are really only two possibilities here: either my Republican colleagues can't do simple math or something more sinister is going on. One thing is clear: Republicans have proven time and again that they don't deserve the benefit of the doubt.

When Republicans preach the virtues of fiscal responsibility, what they really mean is that they want to take away the Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid benefits that millions of Americans have earned. That is not fiscal responsibility; that is moral cruelty.

By creating a massive hole in the deficit with the Republican tax scam, this middle class con was the first step of a scheme to undermine Social Security and Medicare. This disgraceful amendment being considered today is the second step.

We have seen this movie before. Republicans followed the budget-busting Bush tax cuts for the wealthy with an attempt to privatize Social Security and they followed the budget-busting Bush recession with an attempt to voucherize Medicare.

The best way to clean up the fiscal mess made by my colleagues on the other side of the aisle is to repeal the Republican tax scam. We do not need to amend the Constitution, and we must not force their fiscal mess to be cleaned up at the cost of our seniors' health and dignity.

I urge my colleagues to vote "no" on the amendment and to keep fighting against the Republicans' perpetual crusade to break the promises we have made to our seniors.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SMUCKER).

Mr. SMUCKER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of Chairman GOODLATTE's balanced budget amendment.

Clearly, the status quo here in Congress is failing the American people, and real change is needed. Our budget process is broken, and a balanced budget amendment is exactly the mecha-

nism we need to force the decisions to get our fiscal house in order.

Congress has passed more than 100 continuing resolutions just in the last 20 years. We move from one continuing resolution and one omnibus to the next.

I knew when I came to Congress that the Federal budget process wasn't working as intended. From the outside, it doesn't look good. Now having served on the Budget Committee for more than a year, I can say it doesn't look any better from the inside.

The latest omnibus supported a number of provisions, like funding our military, fighting the opioid epidemic, agricultural reform, school safety measures, measures that I support, but these priorities can and must be achieved in a fiscally responsible manner that doesn't grow the size of the Federal Government.

How do I know we can achieve that? Because we took steps in that direction on the Budget Committee. Last year, the committee passed a budget that would balance in 10 years. It was a fiscally responsible path towards funding critical government programs, but that budget isn't enforceable and no one is accountable.

So I think the first step is to pass this balanced budget amendment here in the House. It is long past time that Congress finally put an end to irresponsible spending, saddling our children and grandchildren with an insurmountable debt.

This amendment would make balancing the budget the norm rather than the exception. It would codify Congress' responsibility to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars.

There are numerous proposals to reform our Federal budget process, some that I have introduced myself, but I believe this amendment would be the most meaningful budget and spending reform that we could enact. It works for the States, it works in Pennsylvania, and it will work for Washington.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman GOODLATTE for his leadership. Every Congress since 2007, he has introduced this amendment to balance our Federal Government. It is an important effort and one that he has led.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL), the distinguished ranking member of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New York for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong opposition to H.J. Res. 2, the disgraceful so-called balanced budget amendment.

You know, it has been said again and again on this side of the aisle, but I think it warrants saying it even more. The Republicans passed their tax bill for the wealthiest 1 percent, which blew tremendous holes into the deficit. So coming here now a few months later and purporting to be concerned about

the rising deficit, I mean, the actions are different than the words, because the Republican tax scam blew a hole in the deficit, made it very difficult.

So if you really want to change and you really want to have a balanced budget, the way to do it is to sit down with both sides and try to figure out a way to do it that is equitable, not something that only helps 1 percent and has devastating cuts for the rest of Americans.

So the Republican tax cuts will balloon the Federal deficit by nearly \$2 million over the next decade.

Again, this is not about balancing the budget. This is an attempt to push an extreme agenda that will result in disastrous cuts to vital programs that benefit Americans. Medicare would be cut by \$200 billion by 2025, Medicaid and healthcare subsidies by \$150 billion, Social Security by \$325 billion, and veterans' disability compensation would be cut by up to \$30 billion.

Not only will this hurt the elderly, our veterans, and the sick, but this dangerous amendment will also tie the hands of the Federal Government and make it impossible for Congress to respond to urgent matters of national security, like natural disasters, like international security crises—we on the Foreign Affairs Committee are always worried about that, obviously—or a dramatic turnaround in the economy. We won't be able to react to this.

So this amendment makes future increases in the debt limit nearly impossible, threatening the full faith and credit of our country.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to oppose this measure and work together to find responsible solutions to create jobs, reduce the deficit, and take care of the American people.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. COMER).

Mr. COMER. Mr. Speaker, when many of us were growing up learning how to use our first spare dollars or our first credit card, our parents and teachers always told us, "Budget your money and don't spend more than you have."

This is a simple, commonsense life lesson we are all taught at some time or another when we are growing up. It is a reality for any individual who wants to have a sustainable future. It is unfortunate, however, that the same rules do not apply for Congress, our Nation's largest and most important spender.

The United States currently faces \$20 trillion in debt, which will lead us to a fiscal crisis if unabated. Year after year, our mandatory spending levels increase, leaving little room for our defense, education, and other spending priorities.

If we continue down this path, it is estimated that by 2040, spending for mandatory programs will make up 81 percent of our annual budget. This trajectory of runaway mandatory spending is skyrocketing our national debt.

It is evident that this Congress has not taken the necessary steps to balance the Federal budget.

It is time that this Congress make the tough decisions necessary to reduce the national debt and practice restrained spending.

Representative GOODLATTE's balanced budget amendment would require the President to submit an annual balanced budget to Congress and mandate that Congress cannot spend more money than it receives in revenue.

The next steps we take to change our Federal spending behavior will impact future generations of this country. We owe it to our children and grandchildren, those who will inherit this great Nation, to address our national debt.

I remain committed to reining in Federal spending and ensuring Americans' tax dollars are spent wisely, and I am proud to be a cosponsor of Representative GOODLATTE's balanced budget amendment.

Let's pass this commonsense measure and finally prioritize fiscal responsibility, and make smarter, more responsible Federal spending choices for the people of this Nation.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from New Jersey (Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN).

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, in December, Republicans rushed, and I do mean rushed, sped to pass with little thought, debate, or consideration for the long-term impact, a tax overhaul that has since been exposed over and over again for its structural and fiscal flaws.

Contrary to the false bill of goods that they are still marketing to the American people, this scam would shower wealthy households and big corporations with the dollars shaved off of the incomes of working Americans nationwide. It further widens the already gaping divide between the ultra rich and the middle class.

In New Jersey, my constituents will be among those hardest hit as it guts the Federal deduction for State and local taxes, the exact opposite of the cuts and breaks Republicans have given so much lip service to.

□ 1345

Now, months after patting themselves on the back, Republicans are backtracking. It seems that, on second thought, lining the pockets of millionaires and corporations to the tune of \$1.5 trillion isn't a sound fiscal decision, and to fix it, they decided to revive the so-called balanced budget amendment.

To be very clear, this isn't about fiscal responsibility. This is just another scam, hoodwinking working Americans as they cut, slash, and burn away the programs and services that keep families going, that help keep food on the table during rough spells, and that

maintain basic living standards and help people find jobs.

To save the cuts they made for millionaires, they will use this amendment to slash healthcare access and the retirement security of our seniors through cuts to Social Security and Medicare.

To save the cuts they made for millionaires, they will use this amendment to cut employment insurance, early childhood education, and nutrition programs.

To save the cuts they made for millionaires, they will use this amendment to wreak havoc for working families.

Instead of more cuts, we should be focused on investments that will produce jobs and economic growth, building new roads and bridges, ensuring workers make decent wages, and giving our young people the best chance at a good education and a bright future.

I urge my colleagues to vote against this so-called balanced budget amendment and the harm it represents.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Montana (Mr. GIANFORTE).

Mr. GIANFORTE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman, and I appreciate his leadership on this critical issue.

Washington doesn't have a revenue problem. Washington has a spending problem, plain and simple, and it is past time we get our fiscal house in order.

The last time the Federal Government ran a budget surplus was about two decades ago. At the time, the economy was growing, unemployment was low, and Republicans controlled Congress. In 1997, Republicans cut spending and taxes, and for the next 4 years, the Federal Government ran a surplus.

Since that time, Washington has failed to live within its means. The national debt stood at \$5.8 trillion in 2001. Since then, it has nearly quadrupled to more than \$21 trillion.

But this issue isn't just about the numbers. Ultimately, our kids and grandkids will pay for the Federal spending we are not willing to pay for today. We shouldn't force future generations to pick up the tab for Washington's voracious spending appetite.

The sobering truth is that, if we fail to make the necessary spending reforms today, we will face a fiscal crisis. The only way out of such a fiscal crisis would be punishing tax increases and drastic cuts to essential government programs.

It is time we take action to bring fiscal discipline to Washington and avert a fiscal crisis. If you are in a hole, the quickest way out is to stop digging. Amending the Constitution to require a balanced budget is how we quit digging. The amendment will force the Federal Government to face the reality that households and small businesses face every day: you can't spend more than you make.

Let's get on the record here. Should the Federal Government balance its

budget? Should it live within its means like hardworking Americans who make tough decisions about how they make ends meet?

The answer is yes, which is why I have cosponsored and will vote for the balanced budget amendment. I encourage my colleagues to vote for this resolution and begin to get our fiscal house in order.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. COURTNEY).

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, this morning, at the House Armed Services Committee, Secretary James Mattis applauded the bipartisan collaboration and demonstrated political courage for lifting the spending caps of sequestration so that the military readiness of this country could catch up with the huge demands that are happening in terms of our national security.

I cite that reference this morning because, in looking at this balanced budget constitutional amendment, a FOX News reporter described the effect of this is that "a balanced budget requirement would be sequestration amped up on a cocktail of anabolic steroids and fiscal fentanyl."

If people worried about the U.S. military over the last 4 years since the Budget Control Act was passed because of sequestration, they should not vote for this balanced budget amendment because it is not only a straitjacket, it is a straitjacket with a constitutional lock that would freeze Congress' ability to provide the resources to defend our Nation.

Again, just look at the sequence of what happened in terms of sequestration and the damage it did to our country, and listen to what that FOX News analyst said that it would do to our national defense and to our country's ability to address its basic needs and kill Social Security and Medicare, which will be the target if this ever were to pass.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING), chairman of the Financial Services Committee.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. I also thank him for his friendship, and I thank him for his leadership in fiscal sanity.

Along with Chairman GOODLATTE, I will be leaving Congress at the end of this year. Serving in Congress has been the greatest privilege of my life, but I leave with one great regret, and that regret is my inability to convince my colleagues of the peril of ignoring the debt trajectory this Nation is on. We cannot continue to spend money we do not have.

Mr. Speaker, my iPad is awash—awash—of reports about how our spending trajectory is unsustainable. CBO, OMB, private foundations, they all conclude the same thing: the picture of national bankruptcy is ugly.

It wasn't that many years ago that we saw it in Greece. We saw soup

kitchens, padlocked factories, hospitals that could no longer turn on the lights, college-educated people forced into subsistence agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think America is going to be Greece. I wish I knew it for a fact. But here is what I do know: if we don't quit spending money we don't have, we will become a second-rate economic power, a second-rate military power, and, frankly, a second-rate authority, moral authority, as we become the first generation in America's history to leave the next generation with a lower standard of living. That simply is not unintelligent; that is immoral.

Can we have that stain on our record for generations to come?

Mr. Speaker, frankly, I wish we were debating a spending limit amendment today, which is my preference; but at least the balanced budget amendment is a fair fight so that we at least do not mortgage our children's future, our grandchildren's future.

Again, there is a moral imperative. We know what Churchill once said about us, and that is:

Americans can usually be counted on to do the right thing once they have exhausted every other possibility.

It is a humorous comment for a situation that is not humorous. We cannot wait. This is the most foreseeable crisis in America's future.

Today we can make history. Today we can ensure that we show fidelity to our Founding Fathers and to future generations and, for once, going forward, ensure that it is enshrined in our most sacred document that we balance the budget and do not mortgage our children's future.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DOGGETT).

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, like some stormy sermon from Trump on the virtues of chastity, I believe these House Republicans today really do deserve a gold medal for hypocrisy.

After approving their budget-busting, trickle-down, trillion-dollar tax break and refusing to pay a dime for their huge increase in military spending, they have the audacity to advance a balanced budget amendment. Choosing words over deeds, they shamelessly preach the gospel of "do what I say, not what I do."

I have already voted for a balanced budget when I voted for not going into an unnecessary war without paying anything for it.

I voted for a balanced budget when I voted to reject the distorted Republican theology that, when it comes to taxes, less always means more. The more tax cut theology has proven wrong over and over and over again. Republicans keep demanding just one more tax cut to drive us ever deeper into debt.

Dripping in red ink, this newest Trump tax bill that he is promoting right now at the White House certainly validates his boast that he is the "King of Debt," and these House Republicans are his supplicants.

Our children and our grandchildren are being saddled with over \$2 trillion in debt just because of this one bill, all so that Trump, his wealthy buddies, and a few multinational corporations, can receive a tax windfall.

For Trump and his congressional enablers, fiscal responsibility is just a hollow political slogan that they use to undermine the vital education, healthcare, and retirement security initiatives, like Medicare, that they have always not truly supported. They would surely let Medicare "with(er) on the vine," to use the words of one the King of Debt's loudest troubadours.

Reject this proposal.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield the balance of my time to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. JOHNSON), and I ask unanimous consent that he may control that time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Virginia?

There was no objection.

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. JENKINS).

Mr. JENKINS of West Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.J. Res. 2 and to thank Chairman GOODLATTE for his leadership on this really critically important issue.

Washington is broken. After years of excessive spending and wasteful stimulus projects, our national debt now tops \$21 trillion. That is more than \$60,000 for each and every American. This is unsustainable. But we are here to pass a resolution, the balanced budget amendment. This is a solution to this \$21 trillion debt.

Simply put, this amendment means Washington can't spend more than it takes in. It means Congress has to live within a budget, just like families in West Virginia. Families every day have to make careful choices about how to best spend their money. It is time for the Federal Government to do the same.

I am a proud cosponsor of this resolution and urge my colleagues to vote "yes" later today for a balanced budget amendment. It is time to get our fiscal house in order.

Pass this resolution. Pass the balanced budget amendment. Let's get our fiscal house in order. The American people are depending on us.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COHEN) will control the time of the gentleman from New York.

There was no objection.

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY), a scholar and a gentleman.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, there is a word for what we are witnessing today, and that word is "chutzpah."

The majority is proposing a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution of the United States just months after passing the Trump tax scheme, which

the Congressional Budget Office warned would increase the deficit by \$1.6 trillion over 10 years. So having broken the bank and spent their way into default, they now want a balanced budget amendment to protect all the rest of us.

□ 1400

Like I said, chutzpah. One would think such devoted Reaganites might have learned the lesson already.

The majority has once again asked the American people to stomach a massive deficit increase on the hope and the prayer that tax decreases will pay for themselves.

That is the same trickle-down narrative we heard in the Reagan years and the Bush years, and it didn't work then, and it is not going to work now.

The 1981 tax cuts were so disastrous, for example, for Federal deficits, that Presidents Regan and Bush, Sr., had to enact legislation to raise taxes to make up for the shortfall in 1982, 1983, 1984, 1987, and 1990.

Other than that, yeah, tax cuts pay for themselves.

When President Obama took office, he inherited a deficit of more than \$1.5 trillion in the depths of the Great Recession that President Bush gave him. That deficit was cut by more than two-thirds in President Obama's tenure in office.

By this time next year, however, the Republican tax policy and President Trump's policies will have doubled the deficit in just the first 2 years.

This level of fiscal irresponsibility could rival that of the Bush years, when we went from a surplus to a deficit, from a \$128 billion surplus to a deficit of \$1.16 trillion.

Trickle-down theories don't work. They are a bad experiment for the American people. I urge rejection on the grounds of intellectual honesty and integrity of this balanced budget amendment.

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 3 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, as virtually every American now understands, Washington is broken.

For years, Congress has spent irresponsibly and with what seems to be little or no thought for how it might affect future generations.

We are passing along a bill that our children and grandchildren may never be able to pay, and it is as immoral as it is unsustainable.

Meanwhile, our Nation's top military officials have repeatedly warned Congress that the number one threat to our national security is our debt.

We have no choice now but to correct this wrong and institute policies that promote fiscal responsibility.

Currently, our national debt exceeds \$20 trillion, and the number increases every second. Mr. Speaker, when I do townhalls back home, I put the debt clock up on the screen very often and allow our constituents to watch that clock toll. It is frightening.

The last omnibus package, which is a whopping 2,232 pages in length, allocated another \$1.3 trillion. That is about \$582 million of Federal spending per page.

Our government is out of control, and we have to put an end to the dangerous and clearly excessive spending patterns that are coming out of Washington and out of this body.

As I have said on more than one occasion, people all across America sit down at their kitchen tables and create budgets for their families. Small businesses make countless sacrifices to manage their balance sheets. And our government should act no differently.

We cannot continue to spend money we don't have and drive ourselves further into the debt of hostile nations like China, who is the primary creditor in holding all of our debt.

Passing a balanced budget amendment is a commonsense solution that will put us back on the right track and restore fiscal sanity to the Congress.

The balanced budget amendment will ensure our government acts as a good steward of America's tax dollars, not only today, but for all the days in the future. It has the potential to make the bloated budgets of Washington a thing of the past.

Opponents of this amendment will say that passing this will force serious cuts to our budget. And to that we respond and say: Of course it will. We simply cannot get out of the hole that we have created without making tough decisions. But that is our job. That is why we are elected as the duly elected representatives of the people.

Right now, our country faces a point of no return with our debt, and there should be nothing controversial about telling our Federal Government to act within its means. This is simply about aligning and agreeing upon our top priorities.

Thomas Jefferson said that the representatives of a nation should never take on more debt than they themselves can pay in their own lifetime.

We abandoned that principle a long time ago, and, unfortunately, we have already far exceeded that amount in this body and in our lifetime, and it is now our moral obligation to right this wrong.

This is really about who we are as Americans, if you listen to the Founders. That is why I urge my colleagues to support the balanced budget amendment to the Constitution, and help restore and preserve the American Dream for our children and for all future generations.

We owe that to the country. Fiscal sanity, responsibility, and good stewardship is why we were sent here, and it is what we must do.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the Members that my Republican Senator BOB CORKER said that this Congress will go down in history as the worst fiscal Congress in history

for having voted for both the tax scam bill and the big cuts for the wealthy.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.J. Res. 2.

We often get distracted by debating the title of a proposed constitutional amendment without getting into serious discussion about whether or not the specific provisions will actually help balance the budget.

If we are ever going to balance the budget, the fact is it is going to require Members to cast some tough votes, and many of these votes will be career-ending votes, and a constitutional amendment calling itself the balanced budget amendment cannot change that reality.

Meaningful deficit reduction is politically difficult, and it is ironic that the Republican majority seems suddenly concerned about the deficit and balancing the budget. They must have forgotten that just 4 months ago they voted for a \$1.5 trillion tax scam that gave massive handouts to big corporations and the wealthiest 1 percent.

They repeatedly claimed that these tax cuts would pay for themselves, but last week the Congressional Budget Office told the truth, estimating that their tax scam will add almost \$2 trillion to our national debt.

Mr. Speaker, one of the most consequential votes I cast early in my career was the 1993 Clinton budget. That budget included tax increases and spending cuts, many of which were very unpopular at the time, but it was the fiscally responsible thing to do. Not one Republican voted for the 1993 Clinton budget.

Needless to say, the 1993 budget was a tough vote, but it helped create over 20 million jobs, the stock market more than tripled, it led to the first balanced budget in a generation, and, by the end of the Clinton administration, it included projected surpluses large enough to have paid off the entire national debt held by the public by 2008.

But it also contributed to 50 House Democrats losing their seats in the next election.

As soon as the Republicans took control of the Federal Government in 2001 with the White House, House, and Senate, they passed massive tax cuts, not paying for them; fought two wars, didn't pay for it; passed a prescription drug benefit, didn't pay for it. So by 2008, instead of zero national debt held by the public, the debt was \$5.8 trillion.

So now we have the balanced budget amendment, and the problem is that the balanced budget amendment will not balance the budget.

The fact is that the major provision in this legislation is the requirement that if a budget is unbalanced, it requires a three-fifths vote, and the fact is that this proposal will actually make it virtually impossible to ever pass a fiscally tough deficit reduction plan similar to the 1993 Clinton budget.

That budget wasn't balanced in the first year, and, under this proposed

amendment, instead of a simple majority, it would require a three-fifths supermajority in the House and the Senate.

The fact is, it should be obvious that any tough deficit reduction plan will be unbalanced in the first year, and so it will be harder to pass by requiring a three-fifths supermajority than a simple majority.

The question is: Will that supermajority make it more likely that we would end up with a fiscally responsible budget or a fiscally irresponsible budget?

Obviously, it is more likely that we would pass a fiscally irresponsible Christmas tree budget where every Member gets a present under the tree than it would be to get enough career-ending votes to meet the three-fifths requirement under this legislation.

And note that this amendment places no limit on how far out of balance the budget can be once you get to three-fifths.

Mr. Speaker, we shouldn't be distracted by the resolution's misleading title. Balancing the budget will require tough votes, not constitutional amendments. My colleagues must seriously consider whether the resolution's actual provisions will help or hurt.

It is obvious it would make it virtually impossible to pass any kind of balanced budget or responsible budget; therefore, Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to oppose this legislation.

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Georgia (Mrs. HANDEL).

Mrs. HANDEL. Mr. Speaker, let me first begin by commending Chairman GOODLATTE and my colleagues on the House Judiciary Committee for their hard work on this important issue.

I have been in Congress just 10 months, but I have already seen firsthand that the budget process is fundamentally broken.

While I supported the funding measures under this broken process, I did so with reluctance. But both parties—both parties—have brought us to this place with the severe fiscal challenges that we face today. But balancing our budget is not, should not be, a partisan issue.

Across the country, virtually every State has a balanced budget requirement, and Governors and legislatures of both parties meet that requirement. Congress should too.

Ultimately, balanced budgets are about accountability. We must hold the Federal Government and Congress accountable and insist that the overall budget be managed in a fiscally responsible way. The status quo, the same old kick-the-can-down-the-road, we-will-get-to-it-next-time approach is simply no longer an option.

Big problems require tough choices. Every day that we continue to borrow and assume more debt, our decisions get all the more difficult, and the solutions all the more catastrophic.

This balanced budget amendment is only a first step, but a much-needed

step, to improving the fiscal state of our Nation.

Our current path is unsustainable. Sooner than most realize, this path will not even allow us to continue to meet the promises already made to the American people.

"Don't spend more than you earn." That is what I was taught. And that is what families across this country do every single day.

It is time for Congress to do the same, Mr. Speaker. I ask my colleagues to support this balanced budget amendment, not for the sake of politics, but rather for the sake of the future of this country and generations to come.

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO), the ranking member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, who is always so generous and kind.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, there aren't too many of us here on the floor today who were here in 1996, when I supported a balanced budget amendment. It did pass the House. It failed by one vote in the Senate.

Had it become law, George Bush could not have invaded Iraq and simultaneously cut taxes and blown the projected surplus into a huge deficit and debt.

But here we are today.

Now, this debate was actually scheduled for April 1. You know, April Fools' Day. But the House was on its Easter recess, so this is as soon as they could bring it up on the floor.

But it is an April fool. This is an April fool.

Now, we had one colleague call it chutzpah. I was trying to think of ways to describe it: dissimulation, insincerity, false piousness, hypocrisy.

Not this balanced budget amendment; not at this time.

They have just cut revenues by \$3 trillion. We are projecting a deficit of \$1 trillion in 2 years, and they are saying they want to cut taxes more.

Well, then that means something else has got to go. And Speaker RYAN has already talked about what the something else is. It is Medicare, Social Security, and Medicaid. Those are the things that have got to go.

Well, there is a dirty, little secret about Social Security. I was actually using this on 9/11. I will have to get an updated version.

But there actually is a Social Security trust fund, and this is a depository instrument for the Social Security trust fund, and it is here backed by the full faith and credit of the government of the United States of America to be paid to the Federal Old-age and Survivors Insurance Fund.

There are \$3 trillion that have been collected from every working American in the Social Security trust fund.

Now, we have an aging population. There is a problem, but it could be fixed. But the point is, under this amendment, if it was law today, Social Security benefits would be cut today

because, under this amendment, Social Security could only spend its income, which this year was \$40 billion less than its outlays.

□ 1415

What did it do? It cashed in some of its \$3 trillion of assets and they paid full Social Security benefits.

So if this little dream that they have here going passed, every American would have seen their Social Security reduced by \$643 this year, and every year that number would grow, while the \$3 trillion already collected from the American people to pay benefits would never be paid out. Talk about false promises to the American people. That is one heck of a false promise.

I have introduced a balanced budget amendment that makes a little more sense. It can't have these OCO, overseas contingency operation, funds where we shower \$50 billion, \$100 billion on the Pentagon, and it doesn't count. We are borrowing the money. It is creating debt, but it doesn't count. It is off budget. Don't worry about it.

Under my amendment, unless you had a declared war, unless Congress had the guts to declare a war when we have to fight someone overseas, you couldn't have that kind of overseas contingency operation fund and do money off the books.

My balanced budget amendment also would protect the Social Security and Medicare trust funds from those who would rob from that trust fund and begin to immediately reduce benefits for Social Security and Medicare.

This is a ruse. Talk about the most drunken sailor spending money and then, whoa, I have got a wicked headache. Let's pass a balanced budget amendment. Maybe that will cure it. It ain't going to cure it. We need fiscal responsibility around here, and it has got to be a balance of rescinding some of their obscene tax cuts—\$3 trillion worth—which would go a long way toward helping move us toward a balanced budget, and imposing a little fiscal discipline on the Pentagon.

The Pentagon has yet to be audited. The only agency of the Federal Government that cannot be audited happens to get the largest, single discretionary grant of money every year. Once, I did manage to pass an amendment on the floor with Representative FRELINGHUYSEN to require an audit. Guess what? That disappeared in the conference committee because the Pentagon can't be audited, doesn't want to be audited, and they just need more money. Don't worry, they will spend it wisely.

So let's talk about real fiscal discipline around here, real balance, and a real balanced budget amendment that protects the assets of the Social Security trust fund and Medicare.

The people don't care about that. They want to kill it.

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BYRNE).

Mr. BYRNE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to lend my strong support for this balanced budget amendment.

Mr. Speaker, the very first bill I introduced when the 115th Congress kicked off last year was a balanced budget amendment. With the national debt at over \$21 trillion, it is no secret that the Federal Government has a spending issue.

Before coming to Congress, I served in the Alabama State Legislature. Like many States, Alabama is required to pass a budget that does not spend more than we have. We do it each year.

A balanced budget is not some far-flung idea. Families in southwest Alabama and all around the country sit around the kitchen table and figure out how to make ends meet. Small businesses face the exact same challenges. The Federal Government should be required to play by the same rules.

I want to be clear about a few things. First, despite what my colleagues on the other side of the aisle believe, the answer to our debt issue is not to tax the American people more. We do not have a tax problem. We have a spending problem.

Second, the most serious drivers of the national debt are on autopilot. So-called mandatory spending programs must be reined in, and a balanced budget amendment would finally require Congress to tackle those programs head on.

Mr. Speaker, I know passing a balanced budget would be hard, but I didn't run for Congress because I thought the job would be easy. We were elected by our neighbors to make difficult choices and decisions.

We can make a strong step in the right direction by passing this balanced budget amendment, and I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting this resolution today.

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, government is and should be about more than just dollars and cents. Government, and especially democratic government, is about nurturing community, taking care of one another, and defending our common humanity.

H.J. Res. 2, proposing a constitutional amendment requiring a balanced budget every fiscal year strikes sharply against those core values, as much that we see in government these days does.

A balanced budget amendment undermines our commitment to each other, as expressed through critical social safety-net programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP; Medicare; Medicaid; and Social Security. My constituents in my congressional district of Tennessee and millions of vulnerable Americans nationwide depend on these and other programs to make ends meet in difficult economic circumstances.

Therefore, it concerns me greatly that this Congress, which hypo-

critically passed massive tax giveaways to corporations and the super-wealthy, has chosen to devote its limited time to what is essentially a gimmick to avoid actually making politically difficult decisions about the Federal budget.

Just this week, my Tennessee colleague, respected Senator BOB CORKER, called out his fellow Republicans when he tweeted: "If we were serious about balancing the budget, we would do it. But instead of doing the real work, some will push this symbolic measure so they can feel good when they go home to face voters."

I wear on my lapel the letter "F." That is the grade that BOB CORKER and I give this Congress for its work toward balancing a budget: trillions of dollars of debt with tax giveaways to the wealthiest, trillions of dollars of debt with a budget that gives the Pentagon \$70 billion more than they want.

A balanced budget is nothing but an attempt to shortcut government, and it would impose real harm on millions of Americans. Social safety-net programs would be at particular risk if a balanced budget amendment were to be adopted because they are funded every year by drawing on savings accumulated in prior years.

And let's be real about what is going on. After giving tax breaks to the wealthiest and corporations, after giving away massive budget amounts, particularly to defense, they want a balanced budget amendment. How would they balance the budget? On Medicare, on Social Security, and on Medicaid. On people who are ill and seniors who need money to live on and healthcare to keep their lives going. That is who this cruel Congress would say the balanced budget amendment falls on. They would be on the chopping block.

This funding mechanism ensures that benefits could be paid to those who need them and provides the opportunity to stave off funding shortfalls before they occur.

The state of the Department of Justice is another example, given President Trump's sharp political attacks on General Sessions out of frustration with his recusal from any investigation concerning Russia's interference in our Presidential election. Voter suppression efforts, the resurgence of white nationalists in American politics, and the active efforts to undermine the work of a free press are other meaningful topics worthy of our attention; issues that are important to the American public, not a balanced budget amendment that won't come into existence and will harm the American people.

I strongly oppose the idea of a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution because it threatens Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid; it threatens SNAP; it threatens programs that keep people alive and make their existence tolerable. Many constituents of mine depend on these and many in America do.

The House has better things to devote its time to. I strongly oppose H.J. Res. 2, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. WALKER), the distinguished chair of our Republican Study Committee.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

Our national debt stands at over \$21 trillion. This is not a surprise to anybody. It should frighten us enough to immediately alter the behavior of this House.

Congress approved the largely unpaid \$1.3 trillion omnibus, several supplementals, and exploded 2 years of spending caps all in the last few months. Unsustainable, mandatory, and undisciplined discretionary spending designed decades ago has created a debt monster that is seemingly unstoppable.

Over the last few months, we have heard a great deal with our Democratic friends and their newfound concern about the rising deficits and debt. So my question is: How many would join us in supporting the balanced budget amendment?

Many Democratic Members in the past were willing to vote for what 49 out of 50 States already have, a balanced budget. In fact, in 1996, a balanced budget amendment garnered 72 Democratic votes in the House, including our esteemed colleague across the aisle, Mr. HOYER.

In 2011, the same version we are voting on today got 25 Democrat votes in support. I wonder how many have the courage to support it now. We know what it takes. We should roll back wasteful spending, including rescinding appropriations that aren't needed. We need to reform our entitlement programs, including getting able-bodied adults back to work. This is about hope, not judgment.

Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleagues to join me in supporting this amendment that is our moral obligation to ensure the American Dream remains attainable for our children and for future generations.

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY).

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

First, the Republicans passed a tax scam that blows a \$2 trillion hole in the budget and gives 83 percent of its tax cuts to the wealthiest among us and corporate CEOs.

Then they offer a budget that would fill that gap by cutting more than \$2 trillion in Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and even programs like Meals on Wheels. And now, they want to amend our Constitution to require a balanced budget.

We know how the Republicans plan to balance the budget—on the backs of seniors. We have seen this movie before—budget after budget that cuts Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid;

budgets that leave seniors without their earned benefits or access to long-term care; budgets that privatize the Veterans Administration and Medicare; providing vouchers and not health benefits; that raise the age of eligibility for Medicare and Social Security; that cap and slash Medicaid, the largest source of long-term care. And no wonder seniors groups are raising the alarm.

Under this resolution, the AARP says: "Social Security and Medicare would cease to provide a predictable source of financial and health security in retirement."

The Alliance for Retired Americans calls it "irresponsible" and "extremely harmful to older Americans."

The National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare says it "would force severe cuts in Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and other vital Federal programs."

The Strengthen Social Security Coalition says: "We regard a vote for the balanced budget amendment as a vote to cut Social Security, as well as Medicare and Medicaid."

When PAUL RYAN announced his retirement yesterday, he said before he leaves, he hopes that he is going to be able to go after these retirements and entitlements and cut them: Social Security and Medicare. This has already been announced. This is the future if we let it happen. We need to vote "no."

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FITZPATRICK).

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, on my first day serving in this Congress, I introduced a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution, and I am honored to be cosponsoring the resolution on the floor today.

As I travel back home in my district, I get this question—as I am sure so many of my colleagues do—I am repeatedly asked, why doesn't Congress manage the national budget the same way businesses manage their budget and families manage their budget? Why doesn't Congress follow the same rules that businesses and families do, that we only spend what we generate in revenues?

And it is a good question, Mr. Speaker, which gets us to the need for a balanced budget amendment. One would think that we would not need to amend the Constitution to do what Members of this body should be doing anyway.

This is common sense, Mr. Speaker. But for decades, we have seen the problem perpetuate, which is the responsibility of both parties. I am convinced this is the only mechanism to force this body to balance the budget. We are \$21 trillion in debt, Mr. Speaker.

To my friends voicing opposition, we need to be honest about what this resolution does. This resolution does not necessitate any cuts of any kind. It simply requires that the budget balance. A commitment to raising revenues through progrowth economic poli-

cies is the answer. And that is what this resolution will force this body to do: raise revenues to offset expenditures on a dollar-for-dollar basis.

Mr. Speaker, prior to this Congress, our economy was sluggishly growing at about 1.6 growth in GDP, which is fiscally and financially unsustainable. We are now well over 2 percent, on our way to 3 percent, and we need to get to 4 percent.

As one of only a handful of CPAs in this Congress, I know that economic growth has three essential components: tax reform, regulatory reform, and a balanced budget. When you balance the books, you create jobs, which leads to more revenue, which leads to an expanding economy, making it easier for us to fund our critical priorities, like serving our veterans, protecting our troops, funding public education, and preserving our environment.

Mr. Speaker, that is what this resolution is about. And that is why I am proud to cosponsor this legislation.

This is common sense, Mr. Speaker. The American people want this by overwhelming margins. We need to get this done for them. It is our moral responsibility.

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I want to say, Mr. FITZPATRICK got the award from the American Bar Association for his good work on legal services, and I compliment him on that.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. NEAL).

(Mr. NEAL asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

□ 1430

Mr. NEAL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Tennessee for yielding.

The previous speaker said that we really shouldn't have to do this, and the answer is that we don't have to do this. Bill Clinton proved on four occasions that you can balance the budget. It has only been done five times since the end of World War II. So what we really should be calling this legislation that is in front of us today is the "Jesse James Seeks Clemency Act."

We are here because of their tax cuts: Invade Iraq, let's have a tax cut. Invade Afghanistan, let's have a tax cut. The tax cut is the answer to everything.

The last round, let's borrow \$2.3 trillion over 10 years before the Federal Reserve Board, by the way, has a chance to raise interest rates three times this year, as they predicted, for the purpose of providing a tax cut.

Oh, by the way, how about that old song, "Don't Worry Because Tax Cuts Pay for Themselves"? This is what we have heard here, and this is what has put us in this predicament that we are in: \$20 trillion worth of debt.

Now, here is the caveat that they always attach to these arguments, by the way: If there is a Democratic President, you need to balance the budget. If there is a Republican President, you don't need to balance the budget.

Their spending priorities are keen. It is borrowed money to provide tax cuts for people at the very top, further concentrating wealth.

Let me give you some numbers here that I have paid a lot of attention to over the years.

On January 19, 2001, when Bill Clinton said good-bye, we were staring at a \$5.6 trillion surplus, four balanced budgets, and record economic growth, the greatest economic growth spurt in the history of America, and a surplus of, again, \$5.6 trillion.

So what happened? We cut taxes over the objections of many of us in 2001 by \$1.3 trillion. Then we had a recession where we were losing 800,000 jobs a month.

Oh, by the way, in 2003, we came back and cut taxes again here by \$1 trillion, plus the bonus. Then they decided to do a repatriation tax holiday, and now they are here like this.

My father used to have a great line. He used to say: At least Jesse James had enough respect to wear a mask.

This is unbelievable that they would come in with a balanced budget amendment after what they have done repeatedly all of these years to wreck the budgets all under the guise of, if we simply cut taxes, everything will get better.

The reason that this deficit is ballooning is not because of an increase in spending. Revenue as a percent of gross domestic product remains roughly at 17 percent to 18 percent. That is the postwar norm—except for the end of the Bush W. years when revenue as a percent of gross domestic product went to 15 cents on the dollar because of the tax cuts and, by the way, increased spending for Iraq and Afghanistan.

So let me remind our Republican friends of this: the priorities have been wrong. We could have reached an accord on these issues. But today, to do this, to bring forth a balanced budget amendment, we are going to disturb the Constitution of the United States to maybe get them through the next round of congressional elections, because that is all this is about.

So the tax cuts are going to reduce revenue.

Here is the footnote that you might want to pay some attention to: 83 percent of this tax cut that they voted for—without one Democrat, incidentally, in the House supporting it—83 percent of the benefit is going to the top 1 percent of the wage earners in America.

Then they found time, by the way, to double the exemption on the estate tax. So we are taking the estate tax from \$11 million to \$22 million.

Remember this about the estate tax: The estate tax is not a tax on Conrad Hilton. The estate tax is a tax on Paris Hilton. My God, who could be against that?

When you think about how this has been pursued, it is all about concentrating more wealth at the very top for people who have said, "We don't need

it.” There wasn’t anybody beating down our doors in the top percentile of wage earners in America saying, “Cut my taxes.”

We could have reached an accord on the corporate rate. We could have done some things in a bipartisan manner to address some of these issues in making America competitive internationally. But, instead, they chose to do what they always do: Let’s starve the Federal budget, and then say after we starve the Federal budget, “Oh, by the way, we have got to cut Social Security.” Let’s starve the Federal budget of revenue and say, “Oh, by the way, we have to cut Medicare”; and, oh, by the way, let’s starve the Federal budget and say, “We have got to get rid of Medicaid for people who need it.” This is why we find ourselves with a \$20 trillion debt.

I will take the Clinton years and the Obama years compared to what they gave us in terms of Federal revenue forecasts.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WEBER of Texas). The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield the gentleman from Massachusetts an additional 1 minute.

Mr. NEAL. CBO accountants came back the other day and said: Let us tell you right now what is wrong. They gave us hardcore numbers about economic growth, and they gave us hardcore numbers about debt and deficits.

Do you know what the answer was? Let’s not believe what they have to say. Let’s not pay any attention to what they have to say because it doesn’t square with the philosophy of tax cuts paying for themselves.

So the last point is, if you voted for the tax cuts and you voted for the omnibus spending bill on the Republican side—because I know no Democrat voted for the tax cut—today, when you come in, you ought to wear a mask when you cast your vote because Jesse James would be honored.

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear the gentleman openly acknowledge that not a single Democrat voted for the tax cut. I am sure the American people would love to hear that.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. JORDAN).

Mr. JORDAN. Mr. Speaker, everyone knows this is a joke. It is all pretend and never going to become law. It is never going to happen. People are going to support it because voting for a balanced budget amendment is like voting for motherhood and apple pie. But everybody on this floor knows this is all pretend.

The time to deal with spending was 3 weeks ago. Three weeks ago was the time for political courage and some discipline. Some political will was 3 weeks ago, when we got a 2,232-page bill that we had 15 hours to look at. That was when we needed to deal with spending.

Fifteen hours to look at a \$1.3 trillion spending package, the second larg-

est spending package in American history, and we had 15 hours to look at it?

Oh, and guess what. Do you know how long we got to debate it? One hour. On a 3-page bill that is never going to happen, do you know how long we are debating this? Four hours.

The time for political courage was 3 weeks ago. The last vote we took before the Easter recess, \$1.3 trillion of spending, funding things we as Republicans said we would never fund, not funding things we told the voters we were going to fund, and then we go home and we come back, and the first thing we do with 4 hours of debate—not 1, like we had on that bill—is a bill that is never going to happen.

It is no wonder Americans hate this place. It is no wonder they are cynical. I don’t blame them. This ticks me off. There is just no other way to say it. More importantly, it ticks off the American people, and it should.

For the last 24 hours, everyone in this town has been focused on who is going to be the next Speaker. Let me tell you something, a much more important question than who is going to be the next Speaker, who is going to be the Speaker next year, is what are Republicans going to do this year? Are we going to get back to doing what the American people elected us to do on November 8, 2016? Are we going to get back to doing what we told them we were going to do, the mandate of that election, or are we going to keep doing pretend things like this?

Let’s do what we said. We make this so hard. Let’s just do what we said we would do. That will be good politics, and, more importantly, that would be good policy for the hardworking families of this great country.

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. YARMUTH), who is the ranking member and future chairman of the Budget Committee.

Mr. YARMUTH. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, just months ago, we were debating the so-called Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. During that debate, I warned that it was the first of the Republicans’ three-step plan to give to the wealthy and make hardworking families pay the price.

Republicans were successful in enacting step one, the tax scam that gave more than 80 percent of the benefits to the top 1 percent. Just one company, Pfizer Pharmaceuticals, is now pocketing \$218 million more every week under this new law. They are not alone. These tax cuts are showering big corporations and Wall Street with taxpayer money at an obscene level. That was step one.

Step two, exploding our deficits, was confirmed this week by the Congressional Budget Office. They concluded that the GOP tax cuts will add nearly \$2 trillion to the Federal debt over the next decade.

That brings us to step three. Having provided millionaires and big corpora-

tions with huge tax cuts that do little to grow our economy, the GOP has starved our government of revenues. So, naturally, they are using the resulting deficits as an excuse for massive cuts to programs that millions of Americans rely on, including Medicare, Social Security, and Medicaid.

That is what the amendment we are now considering would do. It would put in place a constitutionally mandated process solely designed to impose these extreme cuts. That is because it comes packaged with the GOP’s new religious belief that tax cuts for the rich will save us all. They believe this despite the fact that history and nearly every respected economist will tell you that the only way we can responsibly balance our budget is to include new revenues.

So let’s call this balanced budget amendment what it is: a stunt to give Republicans political cover for their deficit-exploding tax scam. The party of so-called fiscal hawks has become the party of fiscal hypocrites. They know it, and so do the American people.

While this bill may be a political gimmick, it is a dangerous one that will have dire consequences for our economy and American families. To begin with, when in effect, it would require that the entire Federal budget this year be cut by at least 20 percent. That would be not just unprecedented, it would be devastating.

Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, veterans’ healthcare, infrastructure, job training, nutrition assistance, and programs that help make housing affordable and higher education attainable would all be jeopardized.

But that is not all. This amendment would put an intolerable financial strain on every State in this country, forcing them to do more with less. My State of Kentucky relies on Federal funds to cover 37 percent of the Commonwealth’s budget, including 16 percent of education funding and 32 percent of transportation funding. Speaker RYAN’s home State of Wisconsin relies on Federal funds to cover 24 percent of its budget. Chairman GOODLATTE’s home State of Virginia relies on Federal funds to cover 20 percent. All of that is at risk under this amendment.

It would not stop there. This amendment would not only threaten our ability to respond to economic crises, it would likely make them much worse. During economic downturns, Congress can help stimulate the economy by cutting taxes and increasing investments, as we did during the 2008 financial crisis. But if this amendment had been in place then, our economy would have been in serious jeopardy, facing a much higher risk of a full-on, prolonged depression and massive job losses. Should our country face another financial crisis, this amendment would be the worst policy at the worst time.

So, in sum, this amendment would threaten the retirement security of

every senior who relies on Medicare or Social Security and every working American paying into these programs now. It jeopardizes every Federal program that helps our communities grow and hardworking families succeed. It places extreme financial strain on every State in the country, and it would make it much harder for our government to respond to crises or even function effectively. Other than that, it is a great idea.

Mr. Speaker, this is terrible policy that ignores reality and real consequences and is purely intended to save Republicans' political rear ends.

It is not just me making this case. Republican Senator BOB CORKER stated recently: "Republicans control the House, Senate, and White House. If we were serious about balancing the budget, we would do it. But instead of doing the real work, some will push this symbolic measure so they can feel good when they go home to face voters."

Well said, Senator CORKER. If my Republican colleagues truly believe this is a good bill and that it is good for the American people, then it is time for them to go home.

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. ESTES).

Mr. ESTES of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.J. Res. 2, proposing a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

This proposal comes at a critical time for our country. Years of unchecked spending have led to massive deficits. At the same time, threats at home and abroad, crumbling infrastructure, and natural disasters have forced the government to do more. These two parallel situations require tough decisionmaking, but that is what the American people expect us to do.

As I talk to constituents in my district, one of the issues they continually ask about is the ballooning Federal debt that will be passed on to their kids and grandkids.

Hardworking Kansans have to balance their checkbook every month. I served as Kansas State Treasurer where we also had to balance our budget for the State of Kansas. I don't think there is any reason that the Federal Government should get a pass. That is why I am proud to support this resolution, which requires the government to spend within its means.

During the past year, we have accomplished a lot to help families across America. Cutting regulations and passing the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act have helped get government out of the way and our economy growing. Workers are seeing bonuses and larger paychecks. Companies are reinvesting in America. This growth has allowed us to make significant investments in our military, disaster relief, agriculture, and other areas important to Kansans.

□ 1445

However, to build on this progress, we need time to implement policies

that will protect future generations from crippling debt. This proposal is a great start and long overdue.

Let me be clear: this is not a silver bullet. Balancing our budget and reducing our debt will require reforming our entitlement programs and prioritizing our spending. I also believe it will require recisions to the budget, and today I call on the President and the Congress to implement those spending cuts which would work towards our goal of fiscal responsibility and stability. This amendment and recisions are a needed start to that difficult, yet immensely important, task before us. The future of our country depends on it, and I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI), the leader, the once and future Speaker.

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to note that Mr. COHEN is a member of the Judiciary Committee. This is a balanced budget amendment, and what is interesting is it is not coming by way of the Budget Committee, as you might suspect; it is coming by way of the Judiciary Committee because it intends to amend the Constitution of the United States. How sad.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, Members of Congress take an oath to support and defend the Constitution. Yet this proposed amendment we are debating does great harm to our sacred founding document. This legislation is a brazen assault on seniors, children, and working families—the American people we were elected to protect.

Make no mistake, this GOP con job has nothing to do with fiscal responsibility. It is not balanced in terms of money because of their GOP tax scam that has placed us in a bad spot fiscally, and it is not balanced in terms of values. To the Republicans, fiscal responsibility just means ransacking Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security and breaking our Nation's sacred promise of dignity and security for seniors and families.

Republicans like to pat themselves on the back and pay lip service to the principle of fiscal responsibility. In fact, the deficit hawks have either become an endangered species or extinct. They don't seem to exist in this Republican House of Representatives. It may be counterintuitive to the public, but Democrats have always been the ones who have fought to put our fiscal house in order. In the 1990s, President Clinton put us on a trajectory of job growth and smaller deficits despite inheriting the massive Reagan/Bush deficits. The last four—some would even say five, but, conservatively speaking, the last four Clinton budgets were either in balance or in surplus. President Clinton handed President George W. Bush a projected \$5.6 trillion, 10-year budget surplus, but Republicans squandered that surplus with massive tax cuts for

the wealthy and two unpaid-for wars. Their spending sprees exploded a vast, new \$5 trillion-plus debt that was an \$11 trillion turnaround from the Democrats' path to surplus.

Under President Obama, then, Democrats restored responsible spending rules. We had pay-as-you-go: Do you want to invest in something? You must cover it. You must offset it or pay for it. That held true for investments as well as for tax cuts. Republicans didn't mind paying for food stamps, but they did mind paying for tax cuts for the rich; that they wanted to have exempted from pay-as-you-go.

But despite President Obama's restoring responsible spending rules and slashing the Bush deficit by hundreds of billions of dollars, this Republican Congress has raced back toward fiscal ruin, recklessly erasing that progress and exploding the debt with their contempt for fiscal responsibility.

Republicans exploded deficits by another \$2 trillion with their GOP tax scam and its massive handouts to corporations and the wealthiest 1 percent. Just this week, the CBO exposed the staggering cost of the Republican special interest agenda, forecasting deficits of nearly \$1 trillion or more every year President Trump remains in office.

Understand this: the Trump trillion-dollar deficit is here for the life of his Presidency. May that be short.

Yet Republicans have the nerve to demand that seniors and little children sacrifice to pay for their tax cuts for the rich and corporate America, for their fiscal recklessness. GOPs have nothing but contempt for the health and security of America's families. The Trump budget slashed half a trillion dollars from Medicare, \$1.4 trillion from Medicaid, and \$72 billion from Social Security disability benefits. Why? So they could give a tax cut of \$1.5 trillion to corporate America. With the interest that it incurred, it would be over a \$2 trillion deficit, paid for by cuts in Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security.

Their legislation priorities add to a mountain of utter, utter derision, disregard, and disdain for hardworking families, from slashing SNAP, food stamps, to gutting consumer protections for seniors and servicemembers, our men and women in uniform, to sabotaging America's affordable, quality healthcare.

And now, with this constitutional amendment, the Republicans found another cynical tool to gut the bedrock guarantees of Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. The so-called balanced budget amendment, which is going nowhere—it won't even win the vote on the floor today—this is engineering, budgetary engineering, designed to slash Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security.

As the AARP warns, the GOP balanced budget amendment, so-called, would subject Social Security and Medicare to deep cuts that would be, in

their words, devastating for millions of Americans. The American people cannot afford Republicans' fiscal hypocrisy and their relentless efforts to gut Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security—I can't say it enough—just to enrich the special interests.

Democrats know that investments in the health and strength of the American people are the best ways to reduce the deficit and grow the economy. In fact, nothing brings more money to the treasury than investing in the education of the American people: early childhood, K-12, higher education, post-grad, lifetime learning for our workers.

Democrats will continue to cut the deficit, create good-paying jobs, protect American families with a better deal, better jobs, better pay, a better future for all Americans.

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Maine (Mr. POLIQUIN).

Mr. POLIQUIN. Mr. Speaker, the big career spenders here in the House and in the Senate who have only recently found fiscal discipline, well, today they have the chance to join me to vote for, vote "yes" for, a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution.

When I was the Maine State treasurer, Mr. Speaker, I helped make sure that Augusta's books were balanced without gimmicks. Now it is well time that Washington is forced—forced—to live within its means just like every other family and small business in the State of Maine.

Mr. Speaker, 49 States in this country have constitutional amendments at the State level to make sure they spend only what they take in. It is about time Washington has the same discipline. Mr. Speaker, it is not fair and it is not right when career politicians spend every single nickel that they collect from you in taxes and then borrow as much as they want to spend more. The spending in this town, Mr. Speaker, is out of control.

A lot of us have seen enough. That is why I ask every Republican and every Democrat in both the House and in the Senate to pass a commonsense, balanced budget amendment to our Constitution.

I am very proud to say, Mr. Speaker, that the first piece of legislation that I cosponsored the day after I was sworn in 3 years ago was a balanced budget amendment. Every big spending bill in this town is loaded with pork. The process is terrible. To force an up-or-down vote in the 11th hour on a bill that is a couple of thousand pages long does not make sense. A balanced budget amendment would finally force Washington to prioritize our spending, like we do for those of us who run businesses or balance a family checkbook. Prioritize our spending, and that will help eliminate waste. And that only will lead to balancing our books and then having the ability to start paying down \$21 trillion in debt.

I look, Mr. Speaker, at these young adults in the gallery. It is immoral to

saddle these great young adults with \$21 trillion in debt, and rising, that they have got to pay. A Federal Government's budget which is legally required to be balanced will force the House and the Senate, even with the Senate's harmful 60-vote filibuster rule, to spend only what we take in.

Mr. Speaker, this is our chance, today, to start running our government more like a business, more like a family budget. It is common sense to spend only what we take in.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. POLIQUIN. Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest gifts we can give to our kids and grandkids is taking care of this spending and this debt problem so they are not saddled with a mountainload of this stuff. America, today, Mr. Speaker, is watching. Who has got the guts, which Republicans and which Democrats in the House and the Senate? Who has got the guts to stand up and do what is right and pass a balanced budget amendment to our Constitution?

I will. I look forward to it. I ask everyone to join me.

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I yield the balance of my time to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE), the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, and I ask unanimous consent that he may control that time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Louisiana?

There was no objection.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, the previous speaker said: Does anybody have the guts to stand up? I am standing up, and I voted against the tax cut bill and against the mammoth budget bill that caused this deficit to go up by \$4 trillion.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN).

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, we absolutely need to address the crisis of our Federal debt. And we do it by coming together in a bipartisan way, having the adult conversation, the difficult conversation, addressing both revenue and spending. This is not rocket science.

A balanced budget amendment would be worthy of consideration if properly crafted to provide flexibility in times of war, recession, or national emergency. In fact, I have cosponsored such a resolution. However, this rigid amendment fails to anticipate these unfortunate but inevitable contingencies.

Instead, this resolution is a cynical attempt to pay for all the enormous costs of the Republican tax bill, the one that we recently passed and the one that was passed under George W.

Bush, enacted to the benefit of special interests and the wealthy—overwhelmingly in their favor—and to clear the way for wholesale cuts to critical programs for children and seniors like Medicare and Medicaid.

Mr. Speaker, Congress has all the legislative tools that it needs to fix the deficit, as we saw during the Clinton years, when they had the adult conversation, when they did the tough work addressing revenue and spending in a bipartisan way. Then the Federal Government ran budget surpluses as far as the eye could see when President Clinton left office.

□ 1500

Now, we simply need to muster the will to enact responsible fiscal policies that address both spending and revenue, and the sooner we do it, the better, but it has to be bipartisan. We have to make the difficult choices on spending and revenue.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to reject this amendment and work with me, work with our colleagues across the aisle in a bipartisan way to enact comprehensive budget solutions that work longterm for all Americans.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. ALLEN).

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.J. Res. 2, the balanced budget amendment.

As a businessowner for over 40 years, I am well aware of what it takes to balance a budget, make a payroll, and operate within my means—a practice that Washington abandoned long ago, and everyone in this Chamber is responsible for it.

You know, in business, I had tools like a balance sheet, like an income statement, like a cash flow analysis, and a business plan to make decisions on how to spend money and generate revenues. I have never seen a body that operates in a manner where we vote to spend money and we have none of those tools available to us.

In fact, we can't even run ratios on this Federal Government to know if we should even borrow money. In fact, we don't even know if this government is solvent, other than we know that we can continue to borrow money. And we know, for every quarter of a percent—that happened 2 weeks ago—that we borrow, it creates another \$50 billion in mandatory spending. That is what I do know. Let me tell you something else that I know.

I have been out in the district the last 2 weeks, and I have never seen optimism like I have seen since I have been in office, and I have been in office for a very short time. This administration and this Congress' efforts to reduce regulation and tax reform has created tremendous expansion and opportunity, particularly for our small business community. It is growing the economy. We see the effects of it. It is growing jobs and giving Americans the opportunities they deserve.

We know that for every percent this economy grows, it adds \$2 trillion to revenues over 10 years. Yes, we have a spending problem, but don't we want to grow revenues? There are two parts of the balance sheet here.

Mr. Speaker, I have never been part of a body where you spend the money first and then you have to vote to increase the debt after you spent the money. You know, there may be a reason for that in that I don't know that anybody would vote to increase the debt if you did it before you spent the money. You don't do that in business. You know, who has ever heard, in business, of spending the money first, and then going to the bank to borrow the money? It will not happen, and it should not happen here.

The legislation we are voting on today is simple. It requires Congress—and we need this discipline—to not spend more than it receives in revenue. Facing over \$20 trillion in debt in this country, Congress must make a change to address Washington's out-of-control spending habits. This legislation is long past due, and I am proud to vote to finally hold Washington to the same standards that we hold the American people to.

It is common sense to balance our budgets. I would like to thank the House Judiciary Committee for all their hard work in getting this legislation to the House floor, and I urge all my colleagues to join me in supporting this important legislation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. STEWART). Without objection, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. RASKIN) will control the time for the minority. There was no objection.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), the House Democratic minority whip.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time, and I rise today not so much to oppose this legislation, as to deride it as a sham, as a fraud, as a pretense of fiscal responsibility. If you want to balance the budget, just do it.

I have served here for years and years and years when my Republican colleagues have controlled the House, the Senate, and the Presidency. Just do it. Don't talk about it.

Now, I come here as someone who has voted for balanced budget amendments in the past, but I have become extraordinarily cynical at people who vote to cut the cost of their product way below the price of producing it. That is a formula for bankruptcy in any business any place in the world.

For Republicans to bring a balanced budget amendment to the floor just weeks after adding \$1.8 trillion to deficits and tax breaks for the wealthiest is the epitome of hypocrisy. Nobody—nobody believes anymore that Republicans care about deficit reduction or balancing the budget, let alone their own members.

Now, ladies and gentlemen on the Republican side of the aisle, let me call to

your attention the chair's remarks of your Freedom Caucus. Hear me. I am going to quote MARK MEADOWS. The Freedom Caucus, the most conservative element, supposedly, of Congress, MARK MEADOWS says this: "There is no one on Capitol Hill and certainly no one on Main Street who takes this vote seriously." MARK MEADOWS.

Conservative Republican TOM MASSIE, a Republican, a very conservative Republican, says this: "Audacity, noun: Voting on a constitutional balanced budget amendment only 4 legislative days after ramming through massive deficit spending because you believe this stunt"—MASSIE's word, not mine—"this stunt will convince constituents that you care about balancing the budget."

Not my words. Two of the most conservative Republicans in this House.

And Republican Senator BOB CORKER said this: "Republicans control the House, the Senate, and the White House. If we were serious"—this is the Republican Senator saying—"If we were serious about balancing the budget, we would do it."

We know what it takes to balance budgets, Mr. Speaker. We did it during the Clinton administration 4 years in a row. Now, my Republican colleagues may jump to their feet and say: Yes, but we were in charge of Congress.

That is correct. And President Clinton would not let them cut the price of our product because to do so would have led to bankruptcy. So what did we do? We balanced the budget 4 years in a row—the only time that has been done in the lifetime of any listener to these words.

But what happened? Our Republican colleagues took office, they took the House, the Senate, and the Presidency, and they cut the price of the product, but they didn't cut the cost of the product. And what do we have? We increase the debt by 87 percent in the Bush 8 years.

Democrats instituted paygo rules to pay for what we buy, and they worked, and we balanced the budget. Republicans came into the majority and scrapped those rules. Now we are mired in growing deficits.

The CBO baseline—Congressional Budget Office, nonpartisan—released on Monday shows that accounting for Republican policies passed since President Trump took office just a few months ago, the deficit will reach, this year—

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional 1 minute to the gentleman from Maryland.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, since President Trump took office, this year, fiscal year 2018, \$980 billion in deficits; next year, \$1 trillion. Every year thereafter, during the Trump administration, another \$1 trillion of debt. It will total some \$14 trillion.

After Republicans passed their tax law, they knew they would be on the

hook for its enormous deficit price tag, so immediately they said they wanted to cut Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, and other safety net programs to do it.

This amendment would essentially write those cuts into the Constitution. Hear me. Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, write those cuts into the Constitution. This is a backdoor effort to gut the programs that help working Americans get ahead.

I said I rose to deride this amendment. It is a fraud, a sham, a pretense, but it is also bad for our country, bad for our people. I urge my colleagues to defeat this silly waste of time.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. HILL).

Mr. HILL. Mr. Speaker, I thank the Speaker and I thank the chairman of the Judiciary Committee for bringing this measure to the floor today.

I stand in support of H.J. Res. 2, a straightforward, long overdue effort to have a new tool to balance the budget, something my constituents in Arkansas have long talked about.

When Arkansans sent me to Washington, they demanded leadership and accountability and for me to be part of the solution to Washington's top-down one-size-fits-all approach to spending. With just over \$8 trillion, Mr. Speaker, added in debt over the past 8 years, my constituents continue to argue that same point they did when I was elected 3 years ago, that the government is too big, it tries to do too much, and there has been no serious effort, bipartisan or otherwise, to rein that spending in.

Today's vote is something that—like my friend from Maine—is a measure I cosponsored upon arriving at the House. It is a significant step to getting our fiscal House in order and delivering the kind of accountability and transparency that my constituents demand of their Federal Government.

Why? Why now? Why today? And I approach this, Mr. Speaker, without the cynicism of the other side or the condemnation of this effort, because when our debt was only \$5 trillion in 1995, the Senate and the House had a balanced budget amendment before them, and it failed to pass by a single vote in the Senate. So it was a bipartisan effort to get spending under control using a balanced budget amendment, and that maybe led, Mr. Speaker, to the constructive comments that some have argued today about reining in spending on a bipartisan basis, as was the case in the 1990s, combined with economic growth.

Now, with our tax cuts, we have economic growth—economic growth we haven't seen since 2005, according to the CBO, but the national debt is now, because of that \$8 trillion increase, at \$21 trillion, 76 percent of GDP.

I am convinced this amendment is now the tool necessary, because we have tried budget caps, sequester, rescissions, Gramm-Rudman caps, and we are now left with a tactic, a strategy

that all of our States, all but one of our States used, which is some form of a balanced budget amendment, which is why I come here, Mr. Speaker, to support this effort.

It starts that conversation that was as constructive as I hope in the 1990s, that we have a national discussion about spending priorities in this government and how we can return our budget to long-term fiscal health, how we can prioritize the only 30 percent of the budget that we debate on this House floor, discretionary spending, and have long-term strategies for two-thirds of our spending, our mandatory spending.

We want a bright future for our children and grandchildren, and I urge a "yes" vote.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR).

□ 1515

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member for yielding.

This phony balanced budget amendment is an old, sad Republican rerun. The only real answer to deficits is responsible budgets. America doesn't need this phony constitutional amendment meant to cover up Presidents' and congressional Republicans' failure to produce a balanced budget, even for 1 year when they hold all the reins of power.

If Republicans actually cared about the national debt, they wouldn't have passed their tax giveaway last year that will add more than \$1.8 trillion to the deficit over the next decade.

Whoa, \$1.8 trillion more debt held by the public will approach 100 percent of gross domestic product by 2028. That is economic roulette. The deficit just rises. It kind of reminds me of President Trump being in the casino business and bankrupting them.

Our country hasn't seen this level of debt since just after World War II, when the debt-to-GDP ratio hit an all-time high. That is 1946; this is 2018.

Couple that with the ballooning U.S. trade deficit, which represents the gap between foreign imports versus U.S. exports, now reaching over half a trillion dollars every year in the red, half of that coming from unfair trade with China.

If this corrosive pattern of financial abandon and foreign borrowing continues, at some point in the near future, foreign interests will view America's financial subservience to them as a strategic victory.

Sadly, the Republican pattern of tax giveaways to the rich while racking up huge Federal deficits is not new. Republican Donald Trump's mammoth deficits remind me of Republican Ronald Reagan's gaping deficits, which Democrat Bill Clinton had to rein in during the 1990s.

Then-Republican President George W. Bush, post-September 11, pulled America into unending wars and never paid those bills. When the terrible fi-

nancial crash of 2008 hit from that Republican abandon, Americans paid an enormous price for that, and our economy was finally pulled out with the rigor of President Obama and Democrats in this Congress.

Mr. Speaker, the balanced budget amendment is a ridiculous sham. It is a transparent attempt and a very thin cover for Republicans to protect themselves during the coming midterm elections. The Republican Party is the party of red ink.

I can guarantee you, the American people deserve better, and that change is coming.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. NEWHOUSE).

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the good gentleman from Virginia for yielding me some time today.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the balanced budget amendment, offered by my friend and colleague, Congressman GOODLATTE.

Reining in the Federal debt is not a partisan issue. In fact, the majority of Americans are united in consistently supporting a requirement to balance the Federal budget.

Our national debt has surpassed a record \$22 trillion. You have heard that several times today. That is more than \$64,000 for every man, woman, and child in this country. It is more than \$174,000 of debt for every U.S. taxpayer. If we continue to let this number grow, we will continue to dig a deeper hole for our children and our grandchildren.

Since I came to Congress in 2015, I have worked to ensure the government does not spend above its means. I have cosponsored several resolutions in support of an amendment to the U.S. Constitution to balance the budget and am proud to be an original cosponsor of this legislation that we consider today.

In the 114th Congress, my colleagues and I offered an amendment to the Debt Management and Fiscal Responsibility Act requiring the Secretary of the Treasury to appear before Congress and submit a report with solutions to control the national debt before raising the debt ceiling.

I have also consistently voiced my strong concerns about fiscally irresponsible spending packages, as I did earlier this year with the deal to bust our budget caps and send our Nation further into debt.

Mr. Speaker, we are on a high-speed train heading towards a very large fiscal cliff, and soon it may be too late to slow this train down. This insurmountable debt threatens our Nation's economic and national security, as well as future generations.

The people of this country and of Washington State's Fourth Congressional District demand better and expect their representatives to promote fiscal responsibility.

Over 20 years ago, when the Federal deficit was at \$5 trillion, a balanced budget amendment failed by a single

vote in the U.S. Senate. It is time to put a stop to the Federal Government's out-of-control spending and use our authority in Congress to prioritize spending. This balanced budget amendment to the U.S. Constitution is a great step in the right direction.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON).

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

What a profiles in lack of courage this is today exhibited in the House of Representatives. But it does give us an opportunity, however limited the time is, to expose a lot of the myths, like this notion that the other side continues to perpetuate that Social Security and Medicare are entitlements.

News flash: it is the insurance that the American people have paid for.

News flash: 10,000 baby boomers a day become eligible for Social Security.

News flash: the average women in this country, when they retire, get \$14,000 annually from Social Security, and, for more than half of them, that is all they have to live on.

Yet these bastions of courage on the other side would like to cut these programs not by coming to the floor of the House of Representatives and having a vote on it, not by having a discussion in a committee or even the semblance of a hearing, but somehow, as Mr. NEAL said, with a mask on, decide that they are going to introduce an amendment where they will never, ever have to vote on what their constituents actually have to face day in and day out. These are American citizens who have paid through an insurance program, not an entitlement. It is called FICA, the Federal Insurance Contributions Act.

Whose contribution? The American people's contribution.

If you want to vote to take it away, have the courage to bring up a bill and vote on it.

How about we increase the benefits for the people of this country who need it?

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BACON).

Mr. BACON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.J. Res. 2, which proposes a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution of the United States, and I am proud to be a cosponsor.

For too long, the United States Government has overdrawn its checking account, and we must stop or we leave our children, our grandchildren and great-grandchildren saddled with debt.

In Nebraska, we balanced our budget and even have a cash reserve on hand of around \$500 million. This is the Nebraska way, and we need to make it the American way. Our State law forbids the carrying over of a deficit from one year to the next. This has resulted in Nebraska being ranked sixth for best fiscal condition in the Nation.

We need a forcing function that balances the Federal budget like we have in Nebraska. What Nebraska does, so can we with our Federal budget.

While H.J. Res. 2 will require the President to submit a proposed budget to Congress where spending does not exceed receipts, there are some safeguard measures in the event spending would need to exceed revenue. A requirement for a three-fifths vote of both Chambers would be required to raise the debt ceiling, but Congress can waive that three-fifths requirement for any fiscal year the U.S. is engaged in military conflict that causes an imminent and serious military threat to national security and is declared by a joint resolution of both legislative bodies.

If I could balance my checkbook at home, why can't the United States?

If the State of Nebraska can balance their budget and have a cash reserve, why can't the United States?

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on H.J. Res. 2 to put our great Nation on the path to debt recovery.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY).

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I have been hearing a lot from my friends on the other side of the aisle about soul-searching. Now that they have passed a \$2 trillion-plus tax plan, my Republican colleagues say they are doing some soul-searching, particularly some of my friends on the Ways and Means Committee.

When you are searching your soul, you may think you have done a moral wrong. So today, they are making an attempt at repentance. They have spent hours rallying against the dangers of our country's debt, casting a pretty dim picture, if truth be told. But what they forget to say, or perhaps are choosing not to remember, is their out-of-control spending that got us to where we are now in the first place.

It was just, I will remind my colleagues, 112 days ago that they passed a \$2 trillion tax scam, the tax scam that we know is bankrupting America and our middle class. I say "bankrupting" because, now, 3 months later, their real target is coming into focus.

If Republicans really cared about our Nation's debt and our deficits, they wouldn't have spent \$2 trillion on a massive giveaway to corporations and the wealthiest 1 percent.

No, the Republican tax scam was just the opening salvo to undo the critical programs Americans have worked hard to earn: Social Security and Medicare. That is what today's vote is actually all about. They want to enshrine in our Constitution their long-sought goal to gut the benefits working people have earned, under the guise of balancing our budget.

Mr. Speaker, the American people have seen this ruse before. They didn't fall for it then, and they won't fall for it now.

If this so-called balanced budget amendment passed, Social Security and Medicare would be restricted from paying out benefits to those who have earned them—not because they wouldn't have the money to do so, but simply because it would be unconstitutional if this were to become law.

But I will tell you this: We won't stand for the misdirection. This isn't about soul-searching. This isn't about deficits. This is about cutting Social Security. This is about cutting Medicaid. This is about cutting Medicare. This is about balancing our books at the expense of seniors, children, and working Americans, when they just gave out lavish gifts to the wealthiest corporations in the history of mankind and the megarich, and it is shameful.

These programs have worked well for decades. These programs are the reason that the majority of seniors today don't die in poverty, that sick kids can see a doctor, and that families stay healthy so parents can work.

Now, don't get me wrong, we should be cautious about what the government is spending, but the Republican soul-searching that is happening across the aisle is just a little too much for me. It is not as if Republicans didn't know how much their tax scam would cost the American people. They knew. They simply didn't care.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. FERGUSON).

Mr. FERGUSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting the balanced budget amendment. This much-needed constitutional amendment would finally hold Washington accountable to the same standards that every American family faces, and that is a balanced budget.

I stand here in awe today listening to my colleagues from the other side of the aisle stand here and lecture about fiscal responsibility. The gentleman from Maryland, the minority leader, stood in the well and said, if you want to balance a budget, just do it.

Well, the House Budget Committee did it, and do you know what? The number of Democrats who voted for it could stand on this desk in a thimble. There weren't any.

When it comes to the time for fiscal responsibility and having an honest conversation about the meaningful safety net programs that our Nation depends on and values, we don't need the harsh rhetoric down there. Every single Republican and Democrat should have an honest conversation about the future of those programs and where we are, and shame on the other side for using it as a scare tactic.

Without a balanced budget amendment, this body has proven, since 1974, that only four times has it had the foresight and the political courage to put forth a budget and pass appropriations bills, and it has only balanced in just a few of those.

Enough of the rhetoric. It is time to come to the table and have the discussions. If you want to balance the budget, join with us. Don't accuse us of not doing it. Your vote shows that you didn't do it.

Enough is enough. It is time to have an honest conversation. If those programs are so important, then we as a nation need to decide how we are going to pay for those, and we do know that they are.

□ 1530

We can no longer stand here and have the kind of rhetoric and the kind of misinformation that is being spewed out by the other side. It is time to take our fiscal responsibilities serious, pass a balanced budget amendment, because without it, this Nation has been able to hide behind debt, and we have hidden the real cost and the real pain from the American people, and enough is enough.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO).

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Maryland for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to this legislation. After passing nearly a \$2 trillion tax cut that gives 83 percent of the benefits to the wealthiest 1 percent, it is both shockingly hypocritical and morally indefensible to propose a balanced budget amendment that would force dramatic cuts to the programs that support America's veterans.

In the wake of the GOP's corporate tax cuts, balancing the budget every year would likely require cuts to the Veterans Health Administration, which serves 9 million veterans every year; or cuts to the GI Bill, which is a key recruiting tool to ensure military readiness; or cuts to benefits for disabled veterans who are injured in combat; or cuts to pensions that veterans earn through their service; or cuts to our national cemeteries, which ensure veterans are laid to rest with the dignity they deserve.

This legislation would undoubtedly require cuts to Medicaid, which serves 1.75 million veterans, and it would prevent us from expanding existing programs like caregiver benefits for veterans of all generations.

All of this would happen while the wealthiest people in this country enjoy a tax cut that they did not need.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to our priorities, veterans belong in the front of the line and corporations belong at the back.

The majority believes that we can afford a corporate tax cut that costs \$1.3 trillion, yet we cannot afford to extend caregiver benefits to every veteran, which would only cost \$4 billion.

This vote is, indeed, about a country headed toward bankruptcy, but it is not so much financial bankruptcy as it is moral bankruptcy.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge my colleagues to reject this amendment.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. BIGGS), a member of the Judiciary Committee.

Mr. BIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for his work on this bill, bringing it forward, as well as his graciousness for letting me speak today.

Mr. Speaker, I will say that what I am hearing from the other side leaves my head spinning. I hear yammering, but I constantly wonder: Did they bother to read this particular balanced budget amendment?

The struggle I have with this balanced budget amendment is not what they say. They say this is going to go directly to spending reductions.

The issue for me is, when I look at it, I see that we make it easier to raise taxes, that is what we make it easier to do, by a 51 percent vote. When I see it, we make it easier to spend like we did in the omnibus, the bipartisan omnibus bill, because that only requires a three-fifths vote to set aside the balanced budget restraints by this administration. That gives me concern, because 61 percent of the vote in the House would have exceeded that just a couple weeks ago with the omnibus bill. In the Senate, it was by more than 60 percent. So that is a bit problematic for me.

I will make one last point here before I continue on to the previous point, and that is we are going to see 7 years, roughly, for the ratification process and then another 5 years after that before this actually is enacted. That is 12 years. That means that we are going to have probably around a \$30 trillion national debt by then.

Now, my friends on the other side who are using scare tactics and saying, "This is going to cause this cut here and this cut in programs there," they don't know that. They are making assertions to do what David Horowitz calls "inspire through fear," and that is what we are seeing here.

I think this bill could be better, significantly better, but I also think that hyperbolic rhetoric does not do this body or the American people good when we are discussing something of this magnitude.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KIND).

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Maryland for yielding to me at this time.

Mr. Speaker, this is truly embarrassing. I don't even think "Saturday Night Live" could come up with a skit of this nature.

Here we are today debating a constitutional amendment to balance the budget on the heels of one of the most fiscally reckless tax cuts in this Nation's history, which the Congressional Budget Office just estimated will increase our national debt by over \$2 trillion over the next 10 years.

Eighty-three percent of the benefit is going to the wealthiest 1 percent. What relief is being delivered to working

families disappears in 5 years. This also came on the heels of a 2-year budget that exceeds the current spending caps by over \$300 billion.

Now, don't take my word for it. Consider what Republican Senator BOB CORKER recently said, who was the deciding vote in the Senate on that tax cut:

"If it ends up costing what has been laid out here, it could well be one of the worst votes I've made."

"None of us have covered ourselves in glory. This Congress and this administration likely will go down as one of the most fiscally irresponsible administrations and Congresses that we've had." Republican Senator BOB CORKER.

Now, listen, I have supported a balanced budget amendment in the past, but I have done it primarily as a check against reckless Republican spending. As history has shown, it is typically during Republican administrations when budget deficits explode and during Democratic administrations when they come down.

But why are we making this so difficult on ourselves? We don't need a constitutional amendment. We need to get back to budget rules that we know work.

Pay-as-you-go budgeting worked. We had it in place in the 1990s during the Clinton administration, and it led us to 4 years of budget surpluses and we were paying down the national debt. We had pay-as-you-go budgeting in the early years of the Obama administration, when he inherited a \$1.5 trillion budget deficit from the previous administration, and by the time President Obama left office, that was reduced by over two-thirds.

We don't need a constitutional amendment. We need political courage. We need budget rules that have shown that they work in the past. That is what we should be discussing today.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BERGMAN).

Mr. BERGMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of a balanced budget amendment to our Constitution.

H.J. Res. 2 proposes an amendment to the Constitution prohibiting Congress from spending more money than it takes in every year.

At a time when our national debt is over \$20 trillion and our yearly deficits run in the hundreds of billions of dollars, now, now, now is the time for action.

I came to Congress to make sure that we are leaving a better world for our kids and for our grandkids, for all our kids and all our grandkids, and to do so means controlling Federal spending.

Our national debt is one of the greatest security threats, and it is time to show our constituents and the rest of the world that we are serious about getting our budget under control.

We can't ignore this problem anymore, and the only way we are going to accomplish anything is if we all feel as though we have real skin in the game.

Every individual and business in Michigan's First District has to live within their financial means. There is absolutely no reason that the Federal Government should be an exception to that rule. This constitutional amendment would require Congress do just that: live within our means.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment, this much overdue legislation.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO).

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this budget amendment.

You know, when the majority forced through their \$2.3 trillion tax cut for corporations and the wealthiest Americans, they did not give a second thought to the deficit. Eighty-three percent, by the way, of the cuts went to the top 1 percent, the richest families in the country, the richest corporations, including President Trump.

Now the majority wants our children, they want seniors, they want working families, middle class families to cover the cost. This amendment would likely decimate Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, education, funds for rebuilding America's infrastructure, veterans' pensions, and, yes, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, by 2028, this amendment could trigger cuts of up to \$1.7 trillion to Medicare and \$2.6 trillion to Social Security.

The Association for the Advancement of Retired Persons, AARP, has said of this amendment: "The lack of a dependable Social Security and Medicare benefit would be devastating for millions of Americans."

This amendment would endanger our economy, it would starve the government of revenues, it ties Congress' hands in a national or economic crisis.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities said this amendment would, "make recessions longer and deeper by forcing spending cuts or tax increases when the economy is weak."

Over 270 service, health, child welfare, labor, environmental, good-government organizations like Paralyzed Veterans of America, AFL-CIO, the NEA, the NAACP oppose this measure. We need to oppose it.

With this amendment, President Trump and my colleagues in the majority want to leave families and workers holding the bag for their \$2.3 trillion gift. The tax cut was a gift to corporations and the richest Americans.

It is a mistaken policy and a cynical gimmick. It is a coverup for completely ignoring the budget busting that they were engaged and involved in with the tax bill.

This amendment is bad for workers, bad for families, bad for our Nation, and I urge my colleagues to oppose it.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, may I inquire how much time is remaining on each side.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DONOVAN). The gentleman from Virginia has 46 minutes remaining. The

gentleman from Maryland has 32 minutes remaining.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACK).

Mrs. BLACK. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, fiscal conservatism means cutting spending where possible and, in turn, spending responsibly. Yes, it is a balance. In our homes, we have to do it; in our businesses, we have to do it. When the economy goes down, you don't spend as much in your business or your home, so you have to be balanced and responsible.

Today's vote is timely. The CBO's recent report confirmed what many of us already know: Washington has a spending problem.

The budget deficit will near \$1 trillion next year, and trillions more are projected indefinitely.

Only a decade ago, the Federal debt held by the public was 39 percent of GDP, maybe even too much at that time, but today it is 75 percent, and it is expected to surpass 96 percent over the next decade. Does anybody think that that is sustainable? At what point does the debt become so severe, that we stall our economic growth?

Maybe we cannot answer that question today, but we all know that point looms on the horizon when we must answer that question.

If we don't act, we or our children, or perhaps, in my case, even our grandchildren, are going to find out the hard way. The burden of our borrowing is going to fall on our future generations, hurting their ability to flourish.

I wonder how many of us want to look our children or our grandchildren or maybe, in some cases, our great-grandchildren in the eye and say: We weren't responsible enough to do that; we are going to leave that burden to you.

I could not, in good faith, support the recent budget cap agreement, nor could I support the most recent omnibus bill. In fact, I voted for the Cut, Cap and Balance Act during my first year in Congress, which would have capped the future spending based on the GDP, and I am very proud of that vote.

□ 1545

That same year, I supported the Budget Control Act, which reined in the years of high level discretionary spending.

Some of my colleagues across the aisle are trying to use this resolution to attack the tax cuts, but tax cuts are not the problem. Our economy needed a jolt, and that is what we did.

In fact, let's just look back a couple of years at what our economic growth was; didn't even make it out of 2 percent. Many quarters we were down at 1.5 percent. We are up at 3 percent now. Is that not something that is worth jolting the economy for?

Where jobs are being created; that just didn't happen out of the horizon. That is because of tax cuts that we see

the jobs being created. And by the way, people are having more money in their pocket as a result of that.

We will continue to see economic growth from our tax cuts for years to come. As a matter of fact, I was just with a group of people not long ago that were talking about how a small business owner, a lady that had a pizza shop that started out in that organization as washing dishes, serving pizza. She then bought it. And you know what she has been able to do because of this tax cut? She has now bought a second business; someone who started out as a dishwasher. That is what our tax cuts are doing.

Spending is the problem. Our mandatory spending has been projected to nearly quadruple by 2040.

Our population is aging. Our workforce participation rate is stagnant. For every 1.65 employed persons in the private sector, we have one person who receives welfare assistance. When people need assistance, we want to give them assistance. But work is dignity.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACK. Work is dignity. That is what our goal should be; not having people depend upon the government. When you ask somebody what they do and they can tell you what they do, they are prideful. Because after you ask someone their name, what do you ask them? What do you do?

We want everybody to be at work, not where 1.65 people employed in the private sector, one is receiving welfare assistance. That is not dignity.

This must be addressed. My budget last year began this processing of addressing mandatory spending, and we need to build on that progress.

I agree that offering a constitutional amendment should be done rarely and reluctantly. Our debt burden threatens the kind of country that we leave behind for our children and grandchildren, and we must end this borrow-and-spend cycle that has gone on for far, far too long.

Ensuring future generations have the same opportunities that we have today means making hard choices. No more delays. No more denials.

I urge my colleagues to vote for this resolution.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER).

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, this is a very poignant moment. Speaker PAUL RYAN announces his retirement the same week that the Republicans bring to the floor the so-called balanced budget amendment, which signals a surrender, that Republicans admit they can't budget responsibly.

After the largest transfer of wealth in our Nation's history with a tax bill that was so flawed they couldn't even risk having a hearing on it, they literally were writing the bill while we

were in work session in a desperate scramble for votes and special-interest support.

RYAN leaves as his legacy—a guy who, on the Budget Committee, railed against deficits and deficit spending, slashing social spending—he leaves as his legacy trillion dollar deficits for as far as the eye can see, year after year.

They come forward with a balanced budget amendment. Wait a minute. If my friends wanted to balance the budget, they could do it. They control the White House, they control the Senate, they control the House. If they wanted to, there is nothing stopping them. But, instead, they came forward with an omnibus bill that explodes spending further and adds to the deficit.

The balanced budget amendment would freeze into the Constitution a requirement that somebody else, 8 years from now, balance the budget. It is a classic bait-and-switch situation.

What a legacy for PAUL RYAN and the Republicans. They have made a shambles out of the Tax Code, they have made a mockery of tax fairness. They are not willing to make hard spending decisions today. They want to freeze something in the Constitution that would require somebody 7, 8, 10 years from now to do what they are afraid, unwilling, or unable to do today. It is a sham, bait-and-switch in the classic sense.

I don't think the American public is going to stand for it and, certainly, no responsible Member of this House should vote for it.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. COSTA).

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this imperfect balanced budget amendment, and let me say why.

This week, the Congressional Budget Office released the annual Budget and Economic Outlook. It estimates that the trillion dollar annual deficits will return in only 2 years. This represents the largest deficit in 6 years, and is 84 percent of increased spending over last year.

Today, our national debt is over \$21 trillion, and approximately, for each individual American, \$174,000-plus per taxpayer. Outrageous. And that is simply the debt on the budget.

When accounting for off-budget debt, things like unfunded pension obligations, projected spending increases in the social safety net programs, baby boomers retirement from the workforce, and actual debt is actually much greater.

In order to make our budget sustainable, we must decrease deficits by \$379 billion every year for the next 75 years. Sadly, we are not even coming close to this. In fact, we are going in the opposite direction.

History shows us that nations and empires usually fail when the cost of serving their debt exceeds the cost of

defending their borders. If we continue down this path, America could be spending more on the debt interest payments than we do on our national defense within 5 years.

However, as serious as this issue is to the future of our country and future generations, no one can possibly take this vote seriously, and let me tell you why. We are voting on a balanced budget amendment because my Republican friends passed, on a party-line vote, a deficit finance tax cut that will result in \$2.2 trillion in additional borrowing over the next 10 years. Therefore, this is nothing more than a fig leaf, and it is the height of hypocrisy.

What we should be doing is voting on a balanced budget amendment that STEPHANIE MURPHY has put forth that protects commitments our Nation has made to current generations by protecting social safety net programs like Medicare and Social Security from cuts. But we are not allowed that choice, and yet, we must get our fiscal house in order.

I am one of 38 Members that voted for the Simpson-Bowles Act. Talk about lack of profiles in courage.

Let me make an observation, after being here 14 years, and that is that the rhetoric that we see in this debate and that we have seen in past debates on our budget deficit does not comport to the hard realities of choices that we have to make. It is that simple.

After 14 years in Congress, it is my view that this will only happen when Republicans and Democrats come together to make hard choices to agree on long-term revenues that are in line with our expenditures. It is not a difficult concept to understand. We have got to think of hard-line revenues that are going to be in line with our expenditures. But we are not willing to do that.

So this balanced budget amendment, while not perfect, I am going to vote for it because I think it is a step to keep the debate going and, ultimately, hopefully, will allow us to sit down in a bipartisan fashion to make the hard decisions that Americans expect us to make. That is why we have been sent here.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DEUTCH).

Mr. DEUTCH. Mr. Speaker, according to a FOX News poll from March 25, 91 percent of voters want background checks on all gun buyers. Another poll from Quinnipiac last November found that 94 percent of owners in gun-owning households support universal background checks.

Yet, as the American people ask for stronger gun laws, the majority would rather talk about mental health instead.

That is fine, Mr. Speaker. Want to talk about mental health? The vast majority of people with mental illness

aren't violent and are more likely to be the victims of violence than the perpetrators. And more than half of the Americans who need mental healthcare don't get it.

We have a mental health access crisis in this country, and gun violence is only a heartbreaking sliver of that problem.

Merely 43 percent of psychiatrists accept Medicaid, compared with 73 percent of other physicians.

But what does this have to do with the balanced budget amendment we are voting on today?

Mr. Speaker, this amendment is an attempt to tie our hands, an attempt to force us to dismantle programs like Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. It would force cutting benefits, reducing coverage, slashing payments, or all of the above.

The most vulnerable Americans rely on these programs for a secure retirement, to stay healthy, and to make ends meet when a breadwinner is disabled or dies. And Medicaid is the single largest payer for mental health services, meaning that forcing constitutionally required cuts on Medicaid will plunge our mental healthcare system into even further disarray.

This amendment is just the latest example of mental health hypocrisy of the Republican caucus. It is a standard page out of the shameful GOP playbook whenever there is a mass shooting.

Step 1: Talk exclusively about mental health until people stop paying attention.

Step 2: Undercut and jeopardize access to mental health services, making the problem worse.

I am not going to let this Congress stop paying attention. I refuse to let my Republican colleagues use those who need mental healthcare as excuses and scapegoats.

And if Congress can't move forward with a policy supported by more than 90 percent of voters, something is wrong. Congress isn't representing the people. It is representing the bottom line of corporations that sell guns.

If we want to amend our Constitution, let's amend it to get money out of politics. Let's stop gun corporations from flooding our elections with money to protect their profits. Let's overturn Citizens United. Let's give the voices of the American people more power than wealthy special interests.

The Democracy for All Amendment, H.J. Res. 31, is supported by over 160 Members of Congress and voters across party lines, and it would do just that. That is the constitutional amendment we should be considering today, one that will put the American people in charge of the agenda of this House. Instead, we are voting again to put profits above our health, above our safety, above our democracy.

I urge my colleagues to vote "no."

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 5 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, our good friends across the aisle have been bristling when my colleagues have pointed out the breath-taking budget hypocrisy being shown by the majority today, so I thought, instead, I would offer the comments of their fellow Republicans.

Here is headline news: "Conservatives irate over GOP's budget hypocrisy." "Critics chafe over a balanced budget amendment vote on the heels of an omnibus spending spree."

And then we get quotes from a number of Members, including Freedom Caucus Chairman MARK MEADOWS, who says: "There is no one on Capitol Hill, and certainly no one on Main Street, that will take this vote seriously."

We hear from someone named Barbara Boland, who equated the exercise to "gorging on a sumptuous feast while insisting that you want a svelte physique."

Mr. Speaker, America knows they just drove a \$2 trillion deficit hole into our budget with their gold-plated tax-and-spend scam; and the CBO now predicts the deficit will reach an astounding \$1 trillion in 2019, and will continue increasing annually to \$1.5 trillion by 2028.

That is not something the Constitution made them do. That is not something the Declaration of Independence made them do, or the Gettysburg Address. That is something they cooked up all by themselves.

Mr. Speaker, they promised to drain the swamp, but they just moved into the swamp and drained the Treasury instead. The Treasury is ransacked, but the swamp is teeming with monstrous special interests devouring the common wealth of the American people.

After slashing taxes on the wealthiest corporations and individuals, they propose cutting hundreds of billions of dollars from Medicare and Medicaid and Social Security, the programs built up by the American people with their blood, sweat, tears, and hard-earned labor.

□ 1600

And now, today, after giving us one of the most regressive tax plans in history, they effectively want to make it unconstitutional to spend what we need on the people's Medicare and Medicaid and Social Security.

The whole idea defies a basic principle of our Constitution, which was enunciated by Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes in his famous *Lochner* dissent in 1905. He said: "A constitution is not intended to embody a particular economic theory."

President Trump just signed a spending bill into law while complaining bitterly about it and saying he would never sign a bill like that again. Perhaps he shouldn't have signed it in the first place, but he has got the right solution in mind, Mr. Speaker: Show some courage.

Here is the bottom line: If you show political courage and wisdom, you

don't need a balanced budget amendment; and if you show no courage and no wisdom, then a balanced budget amendment will not save you.

We have the constitutional power right now to pass completely balanced budgets. Indeed, one of our recent Presidents, Bill Clinton, saw to it that we posted not just balanced budgets, but big surpluses in 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2001, all of it done without a constitutional amendment.

Mr. Speaker, if this political-camouflaged constitutional amendment had been in place when President Obama took office with nearly 10 percent unemployment and GDP having fallen 3.5 percent over the previous year, it would have locked the Bush era recession into place and driven our country into a deep depression.

If you have a Congress that can't balance the budget, you don't need a new constitutional amendment; you need a new Congress.

If you have a majority that won't govern responsibly, you don't need to spray-paint political graffiti all over our Constitution; you need a new political program and new political vision.

They burned fiscal discipline and budget planning to the ground with their tax bill. Let's not throw the Constitution into the bonfire, too.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WOODALL).

Mr. WOODALL. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the recognition. I thank my chairman for bringing this resolution to the floor.

I confess I don't have the kind of speechwriter working for me that my friend from Maryland has. He has always had the gift of prose. I come completely unarmed with clever prose. I have just got some facts on my side.

The truth is, Mr. Speaker, and you have been here long enough to see it, there has been a little bit of truth on both sides of the aisle today.

There is a little bit of frustration that folks say: Hey. How come it is true that we are bringing up a balanced budget amendment in the days after we have just passed a bill that is the largest spending bill that I have seen since I have been in the United States Congress? I think that is a legitimate concern. I think it is a legitimate concern.

Now, I come to the other side of aisle, and folks say: It is because we just passed that spending bill that we have to talk about balanced budget amendments again.

Why?

Because the House did its work, as all my colleagues recall. The House did its work underneath the budget caps, on time, before the end of the fiscal year, in the same fiscally responsible way that I have seen this body act over and over and over again in the 7 years I have been here.

Then that bill went across to the United States Senate, where Repub-

licans don't control 60 votes, and it became a partnership bill.

And the frustration that I have heard on both sides of the aisle about the level of spending in that bill happened for one reason, and one reason only: because Democrats voted "yes," and Republicans voted "yes," and a majority of the Congress acted.

What this balanced budget amendment says, Mr. Speaker—and you have read it, and if any Members haven't, it is only 3 pages long, so it is easy to digest—it says: Listen. Spend as much money as you want to.

For all the challenges that my friend from Maryland just recognized, and they are coming again—for folks who believe economic cycles are over, I have bad news. Economic cycles are still in effect. The laws of the economy are still in place, and we are going to have down cycles again.

What this resolution says is, if you want to buy something, agree to pay for it. It seems fair.

If you want to spend something in the name of helping your children, pay for it out of your bank account instead of mortgaging your children's future to pay for it. I think that seems fair.

And the truth is, Mr. Speaker, you know how culture is. Culture is hard to change. For the first 200 years of our Republic, the men and women who ran this Chamber, Republicans, Democrats, they didn't borrow against the Nation's credit card except in times of war.

As you know, it is only at the end of World War II where we saw levels of debt at the size that they are today.

But something has happened culturally in my lifetime where we decided that the responsible thing to do was to spend but not tax.

That is not the responsible thing to do. It is not a responsible liberal thing to do. It is not a responsible conservative thing to do.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you have heard over and over again talk about the big tax cut that happened last year for America. I am glad that happened for America. I am seeing bonuses in paychecks in my constituency back home. I am seeing new businesses open. I am going to more ribbon cuttings. I see excitement and optimism on Main Street in ways I haven't seen it in years. I am excited about that. To my friend from Maryland's point, that is what he referenced in the Clinton administration.

There in the 1990s, Mr. Speaker, we didn't cut a penny in spending. You remember. Congress spent more and more and more and more. But America was enjoying such a great economic boom, all of that money folks were making, turns out you can't pay your income taxes if you are not making an income. Folks were making more money. They were sending more money to the Federal Government. That is how the budget came to balance.

Mr. Speaker, over the next 10 years, after the tax cut—after the tax cut—CBO has just projected tax revenues are going to increase by more than 60 percent.

I will say that again. For folks who want to do more in America, tax revenues are going to increase by 60 percent. The only way, then, we will run a budget deficit is if folks want to spend even more than 60 percent, more than we are spending today.

And guess what, Mr. Speaker. They do. Nobody likes to be lectured in this institution, certainly not by folks who they don't believe have credibility on the issue. And we have heard the word "hypocritical" time and time again on the floor, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry that is true.

But my friends on the Democratic side of the aisle will remember our budget process. What I love about the Budget Committee, my friend Ms. JAYAPAL, we serve there together, and we have amazing opportunities to talk.

Candidly, it is not as collegial as either one of us would like. We shed a whole lot more heat and a lot less light than either one of us would like on that committee. But when we had an opportunity to bring all of our ideas to the floor of the House, every single Democratic plan for Federal spending raised taxes by trillions and reached balanced budgets never in the 10-year window. That is just a fact.

It is okay because we are talking about priorities and where we invest our money, and folks prioritized investments over a balanced budget. That is fair.

Now, on the Republican side of the aisle, every single budget that came to the floor cut taxes and balanced budgets within a 10-year window. That reflects our priorities. We believe in balanced budgets. We believe in cutting taxes.

On the other side of the aisle, folks believe in investments. They believe in borrowing today so we can get greater returns tomorrow. Those are perfectly legitimate conversations to have.

But, Mr. Speaker, my frustration is this. What my friend, the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, has brought before us today is a simple resolution that says: Put out your best ideas and let the best idea win; but do not, do not, do not mortgage your children's future because you lack the courage today to pay for it.

We just increased spending on NIH by \$3 billion, Mr. Speaker—\$3 billion. We are going to do amazing things together as a nation, things that are going to make every American family proud. Cures for diabetes, for Parkinson's, for Alzheimer's. We are going to move the needle for generations to come. We did that together. We both agreed that was an investment that was worth making.

But we are \$21 trillion in the hole, Mr. Speaker. There are a bundle of ideas that we can use together to attack that challenge. This is but one, and it is the one we have before us today.

I would just ask my colleagues, recognize that there is more that unites us in our drive and desire to do what is

best for the American people than that divides us. Recognize that we all want what is best for America.

If you don't believe in balanced budgets, fair enough, but let's not deride the Judiciary Committee, which has been working on this issue not for a day, not for a week, not for a month, but for years. This isn't the first time we have had this conversation. We missed it by one vote during the Clinton era. This is something that can bring America together and not divide America.

I know this: If we do not come together, Mr. Speaker, come together with the votes required for a constitutional amendment, come together for the votes required to make a courageous change in the direction of Federal spending, it will be to all of our detriments, and sadly, not just our detriments, but to the detriments of our children and our grandchildren as well.

I believe we have a Chamber full of men and women who want to do the right thing for the right reasons, Mr. Speaker. This is a great way to start today.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my chairman for yielding me both the time and for providing the leadership to make this resolution available.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentlewoman from Washington (Ms. JAYAPAL) will control the time for the minority.

There was no objection.

Ms. JAYAPAL. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. CICILLINE), my very good friend.

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me the time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to H.J. Res. 2, which would force deep cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid under a so-called balanced budget amendment. Like the Republican tax bill, this amendment is another scam that will hurt American families and the American economy.

Of course I support balancing our budget and fiscal responsibility, but it is impossible to take this proposal seriously after the Republicans just gave away trillions of dollars in tax cuts to the most profitable corporations and the wealthiest Americans without paying for them.

I have been listening to speaker after speaker lecture us about the importance of fiscal responsibility, about the future of their children. What a joke. This is the same party that added \$2 trillion to the deficit, the largest contribution to the deficit by a single act of Congress in our history. And they have the audacity to talk about fiscal responsibility?

Let's be clear, Mr. Speaker, about what is really happening here, what this is really about. My colleagues on the other side of the aisle are using this amendment to lay the groundwork and to cover up their plans to cut Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.

They plan to balance the budget on the backs of middle class families and seniors, and then they will say: We have no choice. It is the balanced budget law that requires us to do this.

The American people can see right through this.

Mr. Speaker, the American people look to Congress to protect the interests of all Americans and not the privileged few and the well-connected. But once again, we see our Republican friends are saying one thing and doing another. They are trying to lecture us about fiscal responsibility just a few weeks after they blow up the deficit to pass tax cuts for the top 1 percent.

This is the kind of political double-talk that drives people crazy. It is the kind of stuff people hate about Washington.

They don't expect their Representatives to give huge tax cuts to the wealthiest 1 percent and then pay for them by underfunding crucial programs that millions of middle class families rely on. But this is exactly what will happen if H.J. Res. 2 becomes law.

Republicans are hoping to fool their constituents into thinking they are serious about fiscal responsibility, but all this amendment does is expose their shameless hypocrisy. They are hoping that we all have short memories and we have forgotten that just a short time ago they ran through the GOP tax scam, which resulted in a huge deficit spike.

Remember, these are the same folks who told us: Oh, tax cuts for rich people? They pay for themselves.

Of course we know that is not true. We said it then, we say it now, and we certainly know the Congressional Budget Office has proved that in their recent report that concludes that this tax bill will add nearly \$2 trillion to the debt over the next 10 years and that the deficit will jump to \$1 trillion by 2020. It is hard to take today's proposed legislation seriously in light of this fiscal recklessness.

We already know that the Republican tax scam will cut trillions of dollars from Medicare, Medicaid, education, infrastructure investments, and healthcare for our veterans in order to fund a massive giveaway to billionaires and corporations.

It turns out that the Republican tax scam was part one. Part two is to gut the social safety net and crucial programs for working families and the earned benefits for seniors.

Given the Federal deficits that are projected in the coming years, the mandate under this amendment would result in an unthinkable reduction in spending on critical government programs. No program would be safe. It would require cuts to national security, the military, healthcare, environmental protection, and medical research.

□ 1615

It would require stealing money from bedrock social safety programs like

Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, foods stamps, disability insurance, and veterans' pensions.

The Center for American Progress estimates that if this amendment were ratified this year, it would require cutting the government budget by nearly one-quarter in fiscal year 2023.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Ms. JAYAPAL. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional 30 seconds to the gentleman from Rhode Island.

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, it would slash Social Security by \$308 billion, Medicare by \$239 billion, and Medicaid by \$114 billion in 1 year alone.

Mr. Speaker, if Republicans are truly concerned about reducing the deficit, they should start with repealing their tax bill that added trillions of dollars to the deficit. Congress cannot under any circumstances pass this legislation, which is a direct threat to the health and safety of all Americans, and will decimate social safety net programs for veterans, retirees, and children.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "no."

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. SMITH).

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the time, and I certainly appreciate the chairman's long-term commitment to the issue of a balanced budget.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution, providing States the opportunity to add a balanced budget amendment to our Constitution.

Let me also say that amending our Constitution is something we should never take lightly. When drafting our foundational document, our Founders intended it to provide not just the outline of our Federal Government, but also to restrict the powers of each branch through a system of strong checks and balances.

We must also understand this amendment, if ratified, is still just one part of addressing our current fiscal situation. We must still do the hard work of looking at spending. Reducing spending, reforming entitlements for the future, and encouraging the economic growth and opportunity needed to eliminate our deficits in the short term, and certainly pay down our debt in the long term.

This is a very vital first step, Mr. Speaker, in getting our Nation on better fiscal footing, but we have a long road ahead.

Mr. Speaker, I urge support for this resolution.

Ms. JAYAPAL. Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD a list of over 270 organizations opposed to the balanced budget amendment.

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OPPOSING THE
BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT

9to5, National Association of Working Women; AASA, The School Superintendents Association; Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics; ADAP Advocacy Association (aaa+);

Advance CTE; Advocates for Youth; African American Health Alliance; AIDS Alliance for Women, Infants, Children, Youth & Families; AIDS Community Research Initiative of America; AIDS United; Alaska Wilderness League; Alliance for a Just Society D535; Alliance for Excellent Education; Alliance for Justice; Alliance for Retired Americans; Alliance for Strong Families and Communities; American Association for Dental Research; American Association for Justice; American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education; American Association of University Women (AAUW).

American Council on Education; American Counseling Association; American Dance Therapy Association; American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO; American Federation of Labor (AFL-CIO); American Federation of School Administrators (AFSA); American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME); American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO; American Indian Higher Education Consortium; American Jewish Committee (AJC); American Music Therapy Association; American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR); American Postal Workers Union, AFL-CIO; American Public Health Association; American School Counselor Association; American Speech-Language-Hearing Association; Americans for Democratic Action (ADA); Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF); Asian Americans Advancing Justice—AAJC; Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO (APALA); Association for Career and Technical Education.

Association for Psychological Science; Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP); Association of Educational Service Agencies; Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs; Association of Flight Attendants—CWA; Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO); Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD); Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America; Autism National Committee; Autistic Self Advocacy Network; Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law; Bienestar Human Services; B'nai B'rith International; Bread for the World; Campaign for America's Future; Campaign for Youth Justice; Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good; Center for Community Change Action; Center for Family Policy and Practice Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP).

Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc.; Center for Public Representation; Center for Science in the Public Interest; Center on Budget and Policy Priorities; Child Care Aware of America; Child Welfare League of America; Children's Action Alliance; Children's Defense Fund; Children's Dental Health Project; Children's Health Watch; Children's Leadership Council; Citizens for Tax Justice; Clinical Social Work Association; Coalition for Health Funding; Coalition on Human Needs; Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE); Committee for Education Funding; Common Cause; Communications Workers of America (CWA).

Community Access National Network (CANN); Community Action Partnership; Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA); Concerned Black Men National; Conservation Legacy; Corporation for Enterprise Development (CFED); Corporation for Supportive Housing; CoSN—the Consortium for School Networking; Council for Exceptional Children; Council for Opportunity in Education; Council of Administrators of Special Education, Inc.; Council of the Great City Schools; CREDO Criminalization of Poverty Project at the Institute for Policy Studies; Defenders of Wildlife; Democracy 21; Demos; Department for Professional Em-

ployees, AFL-CIO; Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund; Disciples Justice Action Network; Easter Seals.

Ecumenical Poverty Initiative; Every Child Matters; FamiliesUSA; Farmworker Justice; Feeding America; First Focus Campaign for Children; Food & Water Watch; Food Research & Action Center (FRAC); Foster Family-based Treatment Association; Franciscan Action Network; Franciscans for Justice; Friends Committee on National Legislation; Friends of the Earth; Futures Without Violence; Gamaliel; Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC); Generations United; Global Justice Institute; Health Care for America Now (HCAN); Health GAP (Global Access Project).

Higher Education Consortium for Special Education; Housing Works; Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy; Interfaith Worker Justice; International Association of Fire Fighters; International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers; International Brotherhood of Boilermakers; International Brotherhood of Teamsters; International Federation of Professional & Technical Engineers (IFPTE), AFL-CIO; International Union, United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America, UAW; International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE); Jewish Council for Public Affairs; Jobs With Justice; Justice in Aging; LeadingAge; League of Conservation Voters; League of United Latin American Citizens; League of Women Voters of the United States; Learning Disabilities Association of America; Main Street Alliance.

Medical Mission Sisters, North America; Medicare Rights Center; Mental Health America; Metropolitan Community Churches; Mom2Mom Global; MomsRising; NAACP; NASTAD (National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS Directors); National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys; National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE); National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd; National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE); National Alliance of HUD Tenants; National Alliance to End Sexual Violence; National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum; National Association for Children's Behavioral Health; National Association for College Admission Counseling; National Association for Hispanic Elderly; National Association for Music Education; National Association for the Education of Young Children.

National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a); National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities; National Association of County and City Health Officials; National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors; National Association of Elementary School Principals; National Association of Federally Impacted Schools; National Association of Letter Carriers; National Association of Private Special Education Centers; National Association of School Psychologists; National Association of Secondary School Principals; National Association of Social Workers (NASW); National Association of State Directors of Special Education; National Association of State Head Injury Administrators; National Birth Defects Prevention Network; National Black Justice Coalition; National Center for Law and Economic Justice; National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence; National Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development (National CAPACD); National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare; National Community Development Association; National Congress of American Indians; National Council for Behavioral Health; National

Council for Community and Education Partnerships; National Council of Asian Pacific Americans; National Council of Jewish Women; National Council of La Raza (NCLR); National Council on Independent Living; National Disability Institute; National Disability Rights Network; National Domestic Violence Hotline; National Down Syndrome Congress; National Education Association (NEA); National Employment Law Project; National Fair Housing Alliance; National Federation of Federal Employees; National Health Care for the Homeless Council; National Hispanic Medical Association.

National Housing Law Project; National Housing Trust; National Immigration Law Center; National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health; National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund; National Low Income Housing Coalition; National Multiple Sclerosis Society; National Network to End Domestic Violence; National Organization for Women; National Partnership for Women & Families; National People's Action; National Priorities Project; National PTA; National Recreation and Park Association; National Respite Coalition; National Rural Education Advocacy Coalition; National Rural Education Association; National School Boards Association; National Skills Coalition; National Superintendents Roundtable.

National Treasury Employees Union; NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE; National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable; National WIC Association; National Women's Health Network; National Women's Law Center; National Working Positive Coalition; Natural Resources Defense Council; NDD United; Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility of United Church of Christ; NETWORK: A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby; Not Dead Yet; OWL-The Voice of Women 40+; PAI; Paralyzed Veterans of America; Partnership for America's Children; People for the American Way; PICO National Network; Planned Parenthood Federation of America; Prevention Institute.

Professional Aviation Safety Specialists (PASS); Progressive Congress; Project Inform; ProLiteracy; Protect All Children's Environment; Public Advocacy for Kids; Public Citizen; Public Health Institute; Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Coalition; RESULTS; Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law; School Social Work Association of America; School-Based Health Alliance; Senior Executives Association (SEA); Service Employees International Union (SEIU); Share Our Strength; Sinsinawa Dominican Peace and Justice Office; Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Congregational Leadership; Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Western Province Leadership; Sisters of Mercy South Central Community.

Social Security Works; Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC); Special Needs Alliance; State Innovation Exchange (SiX); Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future; Susan G. Komen; TESOL International Association; The AIDS Institute; The Arc; The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights; The National Coalition for Literacy; The National Crittenton Foundation; The Sisters of Mercy of the Americas; Institute Justice Team; The United Methodist Church—General Board of Church and Society; Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO; Treatment Action Group (TAG); Tremor Action Network; Trust for America's Health (TFAH); UNCF; Union for Reform Judaism.

United Auto Workers (UAW); United Cerebral Palsy; United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries; United Spinal Association; United States Student Association (USSA); United Steelworkers (USW); USAction; Voices for Progress; Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement (WISER);

Young Invincibles; YouthBuild USA; ZERO TO THREE.

Ms. JAYAPAL. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. MURPHY), my good friend.

Mrs. MURPHY of Florida. Mr. Speaker, when the Federal Government spends far more than it receives year after year, it threatens the long-term stability of our economy, compromises our children's future, and undermines our security.

Amending the Constitution to require a balanced budget is a serious step, but one that has become appropriate. That is because all other efforts to make Congress demonstrate a reasonable degree of fiscal discipline have failed. But not all proposed balanced budget amendments, or BBAs, are created equal.

The BBA we are considering today—and I say this with respect for my colleagues on the other side of the aisle—is poorly crafted, painfully cruel, and profoundly cynical.

It is poorly crafted because it is excessively rigid. For example, it does not allow Federal lawmakers to run even small deficits to help the country emerge from a recession or a depression. That is bad economic policy that will hurt working families.

It is cruel because it would allow a Federal court, if called on to enforce the BBA, to order cuts to Social Security and Medicare payments, harming citizens who have earned their benefits through a lifetime of hard work, and it is cynical because House leadership is bringing this bill to the floor after it enacted a tax law that doesn't do enough to help middle class and small businesses, and that will explode our Nation's deficits and debt.

In fact, in a sobering new report, the Congressional Budget Office estimates that our annual deficit will exceed \$1 trillion within 2 years. CBO also estimates that the debt to GDP ratio will approach 100 percent within a decade—a dangerous figure not witnessed since the immediate aftermath of World War II.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that this BBA is a superficial exercise in political messaging rather than a serious effort to address a real problem. This is a real shame because we must tackle this problem, not as Democrats or Republicans, but as patriotic Americans concerned about the future of the country we love.

That is why last June I filed my own BBA, which has been endorsed by the Blue Dog Coalition. I believe my bill is a far better approach to the problem than the resolution we are considering today. My bill generally prohibits the Federal Government from spending more than it receives in a fiscal year, but it does not dictate how lawmakers should bring receipts and outlays into balance. We must examine the problem in a holistic manner and make the tough but necessary choices our constituents elected us to make. My bill contains provisions to protect Social Security and Medicare.

Unlike the resolution before us, it would not balance the budget on the backs of those who built our economy. My bill recognizes that there are times when running a deficit is necessary or sensible; like when our Nation is engaged in a military conflict or mired in an economic slump.

Therefore, the bill authorizes an exception to the balanced budget requirement when Congress declares war, when GDP does not grow for two consecutive quarters, or when unemployment exceeds 7 percent for 2 straight months. In addition, a supermajority of the House and Senate may vote to authorize outlays to exceed receipts in other circumstances.

In short, the goal is not to make annual deficits impossible, but to make it harder for policymakers to sacrifice the long-term stability of our economy for the sake of short-term gain.

If the Federal Government is going to spend more than it receives, that decision should be taken in a deliberate and bipartisan fashion, and not merely because it is politically expedient.

My broader goal in filing a BBA is to spur an honest conversation in Congress, in my central Florida district, and around the country, about the consequences, for both our economy and our national security, of piling deficit upon deficit.

It is clear our country must change course. We still have time to act. The question is: Do we have the courage to act?

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BROOKS).

Mr. BROOKS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I would like to reiterate some of the comments of others here and make it very clear.

We have been warned over the years in writing by the Congressional Budget Office, by the Government Accountability Office, and by Gene Dodaro, the Comptroller General of the United States, that our current financial path is unsustainable. In accounting language, that means insolvency and bankruptcies.

Back in 2015, by way of example, we as House Republicans had been able to successfully reduce America's annual deficits from the peak of \$1.4 trillion under the Obama administration in the 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012 timeframe, to approximately \$438 billion in 2015. However, beginning in 2015, Washington took a wrong turn.

In 2016, the deficit increased to approximately \$585 billion. In 2017, the deficit increased to approximately \$666 billion. This year, the Congressional Budget Office just this week has warned us that we are looking at a roughly \$804 billion deficit this year. Again, wrong direction. Wrong turn.

Next year, almost \$1 trillion, and every year thereafter, \$1 trillion or more hastening the day that the United States of America suffers from a debilitating, a dangerous insolvency and bankruptcy. Hence, it is very im-

portant that we become masters of our own fate. It is very important that we do not become the debtor—as warned in Proverbs 22:7—that becomes a slave to the creditor who becomes the master.

In that vein, let's be clear about who one of our masters is, one of our creditors: China—\$1.2 trillion. Perhaps for the long term they will be a geopolitical friend, but there is also a chance that they will be a geopolitical foe. Do we really want them to have control over our fate as a country?

And let's be clear about the situation that we are in right now. Right now, if the Congressional Budget Office's projection of \$800 billion is accurate, if, in fact, we are going to spend roughly \$1.3 trillion in our discretionary budget that we just got through passing a few weeks ago—in my judgment, irresponsibly, but nonetheless that is in the past. It has happened. If that is going to be the case, if our creditors tomorrow were to simply cut us off, were to say we are not going to loan you any more money—which they have every right to do—and if that \$1.3 trillion was prorated, that \$800 billion shortfall out of \$1.3 trillion, you are looking at a roughly \$400 billion cut to national defense. That would be their share of an \$800 billion proration out of \$1.3 trillion.

That puts national security at risk. So it is important that we have a balanced budget constitutional amendment that forces Washington, D.C., to act like every family has to act, to act like every city, county, and State government has to act, to act like every business has to act, and that is to act within our financial means, act within our financial resources.

That having been said, I am inclined to vote for this balanced budget constitutional amendment, but I have serious reservations about whether it is ineffective and somehow hollow. It needs to be stronger, and I urge the United States Senate to make it stronger if it passes this body and gets to the Senate.

Here are three of the problem areas that I have identified:

Section 2: "The limit on the debt of the United States held by the public shall not be increased, unless three-fifths of the whole number of each House shall provide by law for such an increase by a rollcall vote."

Mr. Speaker, three-fifths isn't going to cut it. It needs to be two-thirds or three-fourths or four-fifths, something substantial so that those of us who understand the economic risk of a national insolvency and bankruptcy who only constitute 10, 20, or 30 percent of this body are able to enforce this provision and force the United States Government to be financially responsible.

That is one area, increase that three-fifths to two-thirds or three-fourths or four-fifths.

A second area in section 5: "The provisions of this article may be waived for any fiscal year in which the United

States is engaged in military conflict which causes an imminent and serious military threat to national security and is so declared by a joint resolution, adopted by a majority"—a mere majority—"of the whole number of each House."

So let's be clear. In virtually every year since December 7 of 1941, we have had a military conflict. A sharp lawyer is going to say that it involves national security, which triggers a majority vote to go into deficit spending.

What is the law now? The law in the House is 50 percent plus 1, and you can pass a spending bill. The law in the Senate, though, is 60 percent because of their filibuster rule. So we are moving that 60 percent threshold down to 51 percent, thereby making it easier to pass a deficit-ridden bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WOODALL). The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional 1 minute to the gentleman from Alabama.

Mr. BROOKS of Alabama. Finally, this legislation has no express enforcement provision. What good is it to have a balanced budget constitutional amendment if there is no enforcement mechanism? I, as a United States Congressman, or any of my colleagues, 434 other Congressmen, United States Senators, Jane voter, Joe voter, they are not given the power under this constitutional amendment to enforce its terms.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the Senate then to change three aspects of this. Number one: increase that 60 percent to two-thirds, three-fourths, or four-fifths.

Number two: make sure that we adjust the problem with the majority vote whenever there is a military conflict—which the United States seems to perpetually be in.

And number three: have an enforcement provision so that we know this is not a hollow shell of a constitutional amendment; rather, it is one that has substance; rather, it is one that will help prevent a debilitating insolvency of a great Nation that it took our ancestors centuries to build.

Ms. JAYAPAL. Mr. Speaker, how much time is remaining on each side?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from Washington has 11 minutes remaining. The gentleman from Virginia has 26 minutes remaining.

Ms. JAYAPAL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD two letters: one from AFSCME and one from AARP.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF STATE,
COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES,
AFL-CIO,

Washington, DC, April 10, 2018.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE: On behalf of the 1.6 million members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), I am writing to urge you to vote no on H.J. Res. 2 and to reject this and any

other effort to amend the U.S. Constitution to require a balanced budget.

The proposed constitutional amendment is a draconian and unwise proposal that would damage the economy, result in huge job losses and weaken vital public services that all Americans depend upon. It unwisely requires outlays to match receipts each year regardless of economic conditions, a supermajority vote of three-fifths to increase the debt ceiling with limited exceptions for outlays to exceed receipts only in times of war, but not during recessions or disasters.

H.J. Res. 2 is a false attempt to claim fiscal responsibility on the heels of a reckless tax cut that is projected to cause the deficit to skyrocket to \$1.9 trillion over the next decade, according to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), and to exceed \$2.5 trillion if its tax policies are extended. The tax cut for the wealthy and big corporations irresponsibly forced revenues to their lowest levels since 1956, an unsustainable level far below what is needed to support programs that provide basic needs for struggling families, to promote economic growth and meet other critical needs like investing in infrastructure and education.

H.J. Res. 2 would irresponsibly require a supermajority vote to lift the debt ceiling, an already difficult vote that subjects the U.S. and worldwide economies to instability and potential economic destruction. Further, requiring a balanced budget annually would take away the ability to respond to changing economic conditions and raise serious risks of tipping weak economies into recession and making recessions longer and deeper. Most egregious, H.J. Res. 2 is a thinly veiled attempt to force drastic changes to Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and veterans' benefits that Americans earn and depend on.

H.J. Res. 2 is a dangerous and fiscally irresponsible political maneuver. AFSCME urges you to reject this politically motivated and dangerous proposal.

Sincerely,

SCOTT FREY,

Director of Federal Government Affairs.

AARP,

April 9, 2018.

DEAR MEMBER: AARP is writing to express our opposition to a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution of the United States. AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With nearly 38 million members and offices in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP works to strengthen communities and advocate for what matters most to families with a focus on health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment.

A balanced budget amendment would likely harm Social Security and Medicare, subjecting both programs to potentially deep cuts without regard to the impact on the health and financial security of individuals. It would also likely diminish the resources available for programs assisting Americans who are least able to provide for themselves—services such as meals or heating for those who are too poor or physically unable to take care of their basic needs without some support.

A balanced budget amendment would prohibit outlays for a fiscal year from exceeding total receipts for that fiscal year. It would impose a constitutional cap on all spending that is equivalent to the revenues raised in any given year. Because revenues fluctuate based on many factors, spending would, out of necessity fluctuate as well under a balanced budget amendment. Consequently, Social Security and Medicare benefits would

also fluctuate, potentially subjecting each to sudden or deep cuts. Social Security and Medicare would therefore cease to provide a predictable source of financial and health security in retirement under a balanced budget amendment.

The lack of a dependable Social Security and Medicare benefit would be devastating for millions of Americans. Social Security is currently the principal source of income for half of older American households receiving benefits, and roughly one in five households depend on Social Security benefits for nearly all (90 percent or more) of their income. Over 50 million Americans depend on Medicare, half of whom have incomes of less than \$24,150. Even small fluctuations in premiums and cost sharing would have a significant impact on the personal finances of older and disabled Americans.

Individuals who have contributed their entire working lives to earn a predictable benefit during their retirement would find that their retirement income and health care out of pocket costs would vary significantly year-to-year, making planning difficult and peace of mind impossible.

It is particularly inappropriate to subject Social Security to a balanced budget amendment given that Social Security is an off-budget program that is separately funded through its own revenue stream, including significant trust fund reserves to finance benefits. Imposing a cap on Social Security outlays is unjustifiable, especially when the Social Security trust funds ran a surplus for decades—reducing the past need for additional government borrowing from the public—and resulted in a public debt that is less today than what it otherwise would have been.

Older Americans truly understand that budgets matter and that we all need to live within our means. However, they also understand that budgets affect real people; and they certainly understand the difference between programs to which they have contributed and earned over the course of a lifetime of work, and those they have not. AARP opposes the adoption of a balanced budget amendment that puts Social Security and Medicare at risk. If you have any questions, please have your staff contact Joyce A. Rogers, SVP, Government Affairs office

Sincerely,

NANCY LEAMOND,

Executive Vice President and

Chief Advocacy and Engagement Officer.

Ms. JAYAPAL. Mr. Speaker, let me read a couple of paragraphs from this letter from AFSCME.

"The proposed constitutional amendment is a draconian and unwise proposal that would damage the economy, result in huge job losses, and weaken vital public services that all Americans depend on. It unwisely requires outlays to match receipts each year regardless of economic conditions, a supermajority vote of three-fifths to increase the debt ceiling, with limited exceptions for outlays to exceed receipts only in times of war, but not during recessions or disasters."

This is a false attempt to claim fiscal responsibility on the heels of a reckless tax cut projected to cause the deficit to skyrocket to \$1.9 trillion over the next decade.

Mr. Speaker, let me read from the AARP letter. This is, as we know, AARP, the largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans over 50 on how they choose to live as they age. And

here is what they had to say: “A balanced budget amendment would likely harm Social Security and Medicare, subjecting both programs to potentially deep cuts without regard to the impact on the health and financial security of individuals. It would also likely diminish the resources available for programs assisting Americans who are least able to provide for themselves—services such as meals or heating for those who are too poor or physically unable to take care of their basic needs without some support.”

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Mr. Speaker, the letter goes on to say:

“The lack of a dependable Social Security and Medicare benefit would be devastating for millions of Americans. Social Security is currently the principal source of income for half of older American households receiving benefits, and roughly one in five households depend on Social Security benefits for nearly all . . . of their income. Over 50 million Americans depend on Medicare, half of whom have incomes of less than \$24,150. Even small fluctuations in premiums and cost sharing would have a significant impact on the personal finances of older and disabled Americans.”

Mr. Speaker, I am here to say that we are in strong opposition to the so-called balanced budget amendment today. There is a word that has been thrown around in this discussion. Because I care about words, I wanted to make sure that I was using the right word for what is happening. So I looked in the dictionary, and I looked up the word “hypocrisy.” Here is the definition of hypocrisy: hypocrisy is the practice of claiming to have standards or beliefs to which one’s own behavior does not conform. The dictionary definition goes on to say: a pretense.

That, Mr. Speaker, is what is happening, a pretense.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARRINGTON).

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Virginia, our chairman, for his leadership on, quite frankly, two of the most important issues that we face as a nation: number one, border security, which is national security; and then our national debt which if we ever—and we don’t know when—but when it happens, it will be awfully hard to put it all back together, but a sovereign debt crisis would be devastating and would be our greatest national security threat. So I want to thank him for his leadership.

Mr. Speaker, our great country is currently over \$21 trillion in debt, and if we don’t address this looming crisis, our children will not inherit the exceptional Nation that we as Americans have known for generations. This is the most important issue, I think, of our

day. This is my generation’s greatest challenge.

One of the main reasons the American people are so frustrated and have lost confidence in Congress is because we play by a different set of rules. Nowhere is that disconnect more prominently on display than how we fund our government. No one gets to spend money they don’t have on things they don’t need. No one has a money tree growing in their backyard except, apparently, the United States Treasury.

A day of reckoning is coming, and once the sovereign debt crisis begins, we won’t be able to stop it, and the dark days of high taxes and high unemployment will descend upon the next generation of Americans.

History has proven a few things, and one of them is that Congress will only limit its appetite for spending and responsibly manage its fiscal affairs when forced to do so. So the only solution that I see to this potentially devastating problem is to force Congress to do what it collectively doesn’t have the will to do.

That is why I support a balanced budget amendment that requires Congress to—get this—not spend more money than it receives, not to spend more money than it gets in revenue.

The American people have to prioritize to live within their means, Mr. Speaker, and their government ought to do the same.

Ms. JAYAPAL. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time to close.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned the word “hypocrisy.” I mentioned the word “pretense.” If this was such an important issue, why did it not get proposed before the GOP tax scam? Because if the majority is really worried about the deficit, then they would not have passed a tax scam that cost this country \$1.9 trillion simply to give tax cuts to the wealthiest individuals and corporations in our country.

This morning in the Budget Committee where I serve as vice ranking member, the Congressional Budget Office Director, Keith Hall, reaffirmed what we always knew, that these tax cuts do not pay for themselves. He also told us that there is no such thing as sustained growth of the rates that our Republican colleagues have thrown out there and said are going to happen.

So if the majority were worried about a balanced budget, they should have voted “no” on the GOP tax scam. But that is not what my Republican colleagues did. If they were worried about a balanced budget, then Republican colleagues should not have insisted on a \$670 billion military spending budget. But we didn’t hear a peep about this then. You can’t just oppose spending, Mr. Speaker, when you don’t like the things that we are spending on.

By the way, I have some breaking news: Republicans control the House, the Senate, and the Presidency. Republicans have control. But as we are seeing, that does not mean that Republicans know how to govern.

This amendment is a new low to showcase a contempt of the American people’s memory and intelligence. But I believe that the American people are watching. They didn’t buy the tax scam where they are now seeing that only 5 percent of those tax cuts are actually going to workers, and they are not going to believe in this maneuver either, Mr. Speaker.

Why? Because, as I said during the tax scam debate on the floor last year, the American people are going to rise up against any concerted and naked effort to cut earned benefit programs like Medicare and Social Security. I want to emphasize the words “earned benefit” because people call them entitlement programs, but Social Security is a program that people have contributed to with a promise that they would be taken care of when they retire.

But let’s talk about the real purpose of this balanced budget amendment. It is similar to what I said on the floor last year in the middle of this debate, a three-step dance. Step one, pass a GOP tax scam to transfer \$1.3 trillion in debt from working Americans to the wealthiest 1 percent and largest corporations.

Step two, explode the deficit—exactly what we heard from the CBO Director today—\$2 trillion to the budget deficit over the next 10 years.

Step three, use those exploding deficits to justify deep cuts to the very programs that matter the most to Americans, Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.

We have already seen this strategy in the President’s fiscal year 2019 budget which slashes \$500 billion from Medicare, \$1.4 trillion from Medicaid, and \$72 billion from Social Security disability.

Mr. Speaker, it is not just the American people and Democrats in Congress who have noticed the hypocrisy of what is being proposed today. Even some Republicans in Congress have talked about it. Our colleague, Congressman MARK MEADOWS, said—and these are his words that I am quoting—“There is no one on Capitol Hill, and certainly no one on Main Street, that will take this vote seriously.”

He is right. This isn’t going to fool anyone, least of all the American people.

Americans deserve so much better. My friend from Georgia talked earlier about how we both sit on the Budget Committee, and we have actually had conversations about how we wish we could actually talk about real solutions. That doesn’t happen as often as it should, and certainly if you want to have a conversation about the deficit and the debt, we should have that. But to propose a balanced budget amendment after you have already voted for a tax cut that increased the deficit by \$2 trillion over the next 10 years, that, I think, is something that people will see through. Americans will see through that just as they saw through whom the benefits of the tax cut are actually going to.

So, Mr. Speaker, today I urge all my colleagues to vote “no” on this amendment, and let’s get back to the real work of serving the American people with real discussions and real questions that come up at the time when they are relevant.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

In closing, let me quote President Ronald Reagan. In his address to the Nation on the fiscal year 1983 Federal budget, he said:

“Only a constitutional amendment will do the job.”

“With the stick of a balanced budget amendment, we can stop government squandering, overtaxing ways, and save our economy.”

A few years, later he said this in his weekly radio address:

“One part of our Founding Fathers’ genius was their provision for amending the Constitution. They knew they had created a good document but not a perfect one. In fact, even two centuries ago, some of them, especially Thomas Jefferson, were troubled by one omission: the lack of a limitation on public borrowing by the Federal Government.”

“Well, even in their reservations about the Constitution, the Founding Fathers were perceptive and wise.

“I think most of you know how badly out of control Federal spending has gotten in recent years;”—I’m quoting President Reagan in 1980—“today the national debt is \$2.25 trillion.”

“... I’m one of those Americans who has always believed that a constitutional amendment mandating that Congress balance the budget is the answer to what ails us.”

That was 30 years ago. Today the national debt is over \$20 trillion, and President Reagan’s words ring 10 times louder as a result.

I urge all my colleagues to join me in supporting this amendment and in freeing our children and grandchildren from the burden of a crippling debt they had no hand in creating so they and their own children and generations to come can be free to chart their own futures.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this important amendment to the United States Constitution, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, here they go again. Republicans are coming to the House floor to decry growing deficits, as if they had nothing to do with them.

Just this week, the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) reported that the federal deficit is going to double over the next five years—driven by policies passed by a Republican-controlled House and a Republican-controlled Senate and signed into law by a Republican President.

Their hands are stained with red ink.

The fact that these same Republicans are now saying we need a Balanced Budget Amendment to tame our debt is more than a little hard to swallow. In fact, I don’t know how they are not choking on their hypocrisy.

Republicans increased the deficit by \$1.9 trillion to provide huge tax breaks mostly to wealthy individuals and large corporations. Just look at the analysis from the Tax Policy Center, which shows the top one percent—those with income over \$730,000 a year—getting an average tax cut of over \$50,000 in 2018, compared to only \$60 for those at the bottom.

And CBO tells us the deficit will grow even higher if the GOP further extends these tax cuts for the top.

The purpose of today’s activity is not to bring balance to the budget—it is to provide political cover for Republicans. But even they are having trouble pretending to take this bill seriously.

Here’s what Representative MARK MEADOWS, Chairman of the Freedom Caucus, has said about this measure:

There is no one on Capitol Hill, and certainly no one on Main Street, that will take this vote seriously.

Representative JIM JORDAN characterized today’s proceedings by saying:

... we’re going to pound our chest like Tarzan and say we’re for a balanced budget, it’s not going to fool anybody.

And a staffer for the conservative Club for Growth summarized the whole effort as, “Leadership is just trying to check a box here.”

If today’s legislation was only about hiding the real Republican record on rising debt, it would be bad enough. But this measure also paves the way for devastating cuts in critical programs, including Social Security and Medicare.

The Republican balanced budget amendment would prevent Social Security from drawing down savings the program is now accruing in its trust fund to pay promised benefits in the future. This would force cuts in Social Security benefits because all federal expenditures would have to be covered by tax revenues collected during that same year. A similar problem would exist for paying future Medicare benefits out of that program’s trust fund.

Additionally, by requiring a balanced budget every year, regardless of the state of our economy, this legislation would force benefit cuts and tax increases at the worst possible time—potentially turning mild recessions into great depressions. Not only would that be devastating for hard-working families, it also would drive future deficits even higher.

Mr. Speaker, today our Republican colleagues are hoping their concerned words will hide their harmful actions on increasing our nation’s debt. But in doing so, they are only creating more potential harm. We should reject this deceptive and dangerous charade.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the Balanced Budget Amendment.

This Monday, we heard that federal deficits are going to be almost \$2 trillion more over the next decade than previously projected. While there is more than one reason for our exploding deficit, the GOP’s tax reform bill increased our deficit by almost 20 percent.

Last fall, I and many of my colleagues voiced our fears that the so-called party of fiscal conservatism was going to try to pay for their tax bill by gutting Medicare and Social Security.

I agree with the amendment’s authors that Congress urgently needs to address our debt.

If Congress advanced a carefully structured balanced budget amendment, with waivers to allow fast action to stabilize the markets in the event of a financial crisis like the one we faced just a few short years ago, and with waivers to allow us to fulfill the promises that we have already made to our country’s senior citizens, I would support it.

But this amendment does not do that. It endangers our long-term prosperity in order to pay short-term lip service to fiscal responsibility.

I do not support potentially pulling the rug out from under Americans counting on their Medicare and Social Security benefits, who have been relying on the promises our government made to them for their whole lives. I do not support action that increases the likelihood that our country will be plunged once again into recession, endangering markets and economies worldwide. And I do not agree that the cost of larger tax breaks for multinational companies or of other fiscal decisions made by Congress should be borne by our country’s elderly and sick.

I ask my colleagues to vote to protect our constituents from an economic crisis that could be far worse than the one we suffered in 2008, and to join me in voting against this amendment.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BROOKS of Alabama). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the joint resolution, H.J. Res. 2.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the yeas have it.

Ms. JAYAPAL. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

RESIGNATION AS MEMBER OF COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following resignation as a member of the Committee on Natural Resources:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, April 12, 2018.

Hon. PAUL D. RYAN,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SPEAKER RYAN: I, Norma J. Torres, am submitting my resignation from the House Committee on Natural Resources in compliance with the Rules of the Democratic Caucus. It has been a privilege and honor to have served on this Committee.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

NORMA J. TORRES,
Member of Congress.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the resignation is accepted.
There was no objection.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair