

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