

*Bob Dole*



**NEWS**

**U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS**

**FROM:**

**SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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Contact: Clarkson Hine  
(202) 224-5358

## **BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT**

**BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT IS A QUESTION OF TRUST AND OF OUR  
VALUES AS A NATION; VOTE IS ONE LAST CHANCE TO DO WHAT'S RIGHT**

Perhaps no policy is more important to the economic future of all Americans and particularly to the future of our children than a balanced budget. And that's why I believe there may be no more important issue for the United States Senate than whether we will finally pass the Balanced Budget Amendment to the Constitution.

We take a lot of historical votes here in the Senate, but the vote on the Balanced Budget Amendment is one of the most important in decades. It is a question of trust. Of whether we trust the people, of whether we trust the Constitution, of whether we trust the states. And most importantly, it is a question of whether future generations of Americans can put their trust in us.

Will we follow the experience of 49 states that are required by law to balance their budgets? Do we trust the people to be able to have the right to ratify this amendment through their state legislatures in the process spelled out by the Constitution?

Ultimately, this is a question of our values as nation. Which do we value more: the fleeting interests of the moment, or our economic futures and destiny?

Last year the House of Representatives passed the Balanced Budget Amendment by a vote of 300-132 -- more than the two-thirds majority required by the Constitution. We then had several long weeks of debate here in the Senate before the amendment narrowly failed on a vote of 65-35 on March 2, 1995.

We will shortly have our final vote on the motion to reconsider H.J. Res. 1. The vote total may not change much today, but this vote is important to place us all on record with the American people on an issue of supreme importance to all Americans. So in a few minutes we will have one last vote -- one last chance -- to do what's right, and send the balanced budget amendment to the states for ratification.

### **Thomas Jefferson's Fears**

When we debated the constitutional amendment last year, I quoted Thomas Jefferson, who was so concerned about the ability of democratic government to control spending that in 1789 he wrote -- and I quote -- "the question whether one generation has the right to bind another by the deficit it imposes is a question of such consequence as to place it among the fundamental principles of government. We should consider ourselves unauthorized to saddle posterity with our debts, morally bound to pay them ourselves."

Jefferson's fears of two hundred years ago are today's tragic reality. In 1994, the federal government spent \$203 billion in interest on the national debt -- more than it spent on education, job training, public works, and child nutrition combined. In 1994, Americans paid an average of \$800 per person in taxes just to service interest on the debt -- not to pay off the debt or even to reduce the debt, just to pay the interest on the debt.

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### **The Federal Budget Deficit is a Stealth Tax on Working Families**

Some say deficits don't matter. But the fact is that the federal budget deficit is like a tax hike on working families, and one that binds future generations of Americans exactly as Jefferson had warned.

The deficit drives up interest rates -- and not by a little but by a lot. It is a "stealth tax" that every family with a home, every father and mother with a child in college, every young person who buys a car must pay, and pay, and pay.

What does this "stealth tax" cost in dollars? Over \$36,000 on a typical home mortgage. More than \$1,400 on an ordinary student loan. Nearly \$700 on a typical car loan.

We simply cannot continue to mortgage America's future. If we continue current tax and spending policies, future generations will be saddled with effective tax rates of more than 80 percent. Failure to stem the flow of red ink from Washington amounts to taxation without representation on our children and grandchildren.

That's why the question before us today is, as Jefferson said, "of such consequence as to place it among the fundamental principles of government."

### **Not a Partisan Issue**

I don't think the Balanced Budget Amendment is a partisan issue. Many Democrats voted for the amendment last year and we'd certainly like to have a couple more today.

Several Senators who changed their votes last year talked about a "Social Security firewall." We tried to reach out to those Senators to ensure that Social Security surpluses can never again be used to mask deficit spending. I believed that, after a suitable phase-in, the federal budget could be balanced without counting the surpluses in the Social Security trust funds.

I still hope that one or two of those six Senators who changed their votes last year can "come home again" and support the Balanced Budget Amendment as they have in the past.

As I said, the question of whether we "saddle posterity with our debts" does not divide us along partisan lines -- some Democrats have been a part of this effort from the beginning. But the Balanced Budget Amendment is a critical test of whether we are willing to be responsible for our debts, and to be, in Jefferson's phrase, "morally bound to pay them ourselves."

### **Lack of Presidential Leadership Largest Obstacle to Passage**

And here is where the President has lacked leadership -- where it matters most. Unlike his predecessors, he has opposed this amendment. The White House lobbied furiously against it and rounded up enough support to defeat the amendment last year by one vote.

It is no small accomplishment that almost all of us in this chamber now agree that the budget should be balanced by the year 2002. That's a big change since last March. It's not just Republicans saying it now, but all of us -- from Republicans to "Blue Dog" Democrats to the President. That in itself is good news for America. Since we all agree that it should be done by the year 2002, let's pass the amendment that requires that we do it by the year 2002.

But talk is not enough. President Clinton had an opportunity to demonstrate serious commitment for a balanced budget by urging his Democratic colleagues to support this amendment. Make no mistake: President Clinton's opposition continues to be the single largest obstacle standing in the way of a Balanced Budget Amendment to the Constitution that 83 percent of the American public want.

### **Amendment Will Guarantee What Promises Can't: A Balanced Budget**

The federal budget has not been balanced since 1969. Since that time, Congress has passed no less than seven different laws containing balanced budget requirements.

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But despite all the votes, all the speeches, and all the good intentions over the past quarter of a century, the federal debt has grown each and every year.

Last year we passed the first balanced federal budget in a generation. But President Clinton vetoed it. The record of the past 25 years is frustratingly clear: we simply cannot rely on statutory changes to get the job done. We need the Balanced Budget Amendment to the Constitution to guarantee that the job gets done.

That's why I first introduced a Balanced Budget Amendment back in 1971. And that's why I know ultimately someday this amendment will pass. Maybe not today. Today those of us who for years have been battling for a balanced budget amendment may feel all too much like that ancient Greek philosopher rolling the heavy rock up the hill just to have it roll back down again.

#### **Today's Vote Will Show Where Each of Us Stands**

But this issue is the right one for America. And one day the Balanced Budget Amendment to the Constitution will be passed in accordance with the wishes of the overwhelming majority of Americans. As for today, at least every American will know exactly where each and every one of us stands on the issue, and every American will know exactly where President Clinton stands on the issue.

In a few moments we will have one last vote on whether we can finally pass the Balanced Budget Amendment and send it to the states for ratification. Remember no single action here in the United States Senate is the end of the line.

The final decision about whether or not the Balanced Budget Amendment will go into effect rests with those outside Washington. The Founding Fathers decided to give the ultimate authority over constitutional amendments to the those who are closest to the people -- the men and women who serve in State Houses around the country.

#### **Trust the States, Put Faith in the American People**

Let's trust the states and put our faith in the American people. Let's go through the constitutional process that our Founding Fathers so wisely set up. There's a word for that process. And that word is democracy.

Passing the Balanced Budget Amendment is the single most important thing we can do to ensure the nation's economic security and to protect the American dream for our children and grandchildren.

In this vote we address the fundamental principles of government, and we should each of us consider ourselves bound by Jefferson's admonition to be mindful of posterity, and discharge our moral debt to future generations of Americans.

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\* Remarks delivered on Senate floor, approximately 11:45 a.m.