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The Stouffer Report:

It Is Time to Balance the Federal Budget


Missouri can be looked at as an example for many things. For example, the federal government could learn an important lesson from Missouri's balanced budget amendment.

According to the [National Conference of State Legislatures](#), Missouri is among several states with a balanced budget amendment. Every year, my colleagues and I submit a balanced budget to the governor by 6 p.m. on the second Friday in May. This comes after months of hard work. Since the fiscal year starts on July 1 of each year, the first meetings between Senate, House and the governor's budget staffers actually takes place in late November of the previous year.

Now, we are asking the federal government to do the same thing.

[Senate Concurrent Resolution 36](#) urges Congress to pass a balanced budget amendment. With the way spending has increased over the past year, offering this amendment makes sense. In 2006, Congress voted to raise the debt ceiling to \$9 trillion. This year, they voted to raise it to \$12 trillion. If this kind of outrageous spending continues, we will have to start measuring dollars in the next category up from a trillion, which is a quadrillion. Remember when a billion dollars was a lot of money? Well, it still is here in Missouri. And we will continue to be fiscally responsible with every penny of your taxpayer dollars.

There have been many moves toward a balanced

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budget amendment for the U.S. The first proposal came in 1936. The next time a balanced budget amendment was tossed around in Washington, D.C., was in 1979. It started to gain momentum in the early 80s, and missed a two-third's vote in the U.S. Senate in 1986 — by one vote.

Every two or three years, there is a move to add a balanced budget amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Each time, it has come up short in either the House or the Senate, most recently in 1997. Since then, the national debt has soared to unprecedented levels. This trend will not stop until our nation's leaders realize what it is they are doing to this country and its future.

Keeping a balanced budget is not as difficult as some folks make it sound. The hard part is raising spending and then realizing the levels cannot be maintained. If the federal government would adopt such an amendment, hard decisions would have to be made and countless programs would either be cut or changed dramatically. We are already facing those decisions in Missouri. And, remember, we *have* a balanced budget.

Our hope is that Congress will realize what they are doing to the future of our country and turn things around right away. Missouri is not the only state asking the feds to adopt a balanced budget amendment. I pray we all can work together and make this country even better in the years to come.

Senator Stouffer serves the counties of Carroll, Chariton, Cooper, Howard, Lafayette, Macon, Ray, Saline, and a part of Clay.

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please call toll free (866) 768-3987 or by e-mail at bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.

bstouffer@senate.mo.gov | www.senate.mo.gov/stouffer
State Capitol, Room 332, Jefferson City, MO 65101 | (866) 768-3987

