



A SIGN OF SANITY AMID THE BUDGET BANTER

Balanced Budget Amendment Long Overdue

"I wish it were possible to obtain a single amendment to our Constitution ... taking from the federal government their power of borrowing." --Thomas Jefferson (Letter of November 26th, 1798)

Given all the rancorous budget bull this week -- the latest chapter in a debate which has been raging *ad nauseam infinitum* for two years, you might have missed a news summary about a comprehensive survey of small business owners and managers. Would you be shocked to learn that the vast majority of them



Memo to Demos: Time's Up

are very concerned about taxes, regulations and out-of-control government spending? So concerned are they about the insurmountable debt, which threatens the [collapse of the U.S. economy](#), that small business owners are not hiring or spending reserves on business expansion.

This survey matters because small businesses are the foundation of free enterprise and the nexus of most job creation and economic expansion.

For the record, I can assure you as a small business owner myself, that I did not need a survey to let me know what every business owner with whom I have spoken in the last two years has already affirmed: Barack Hussein Obama and his [leftist cadres](#) have placed our nation on a collision course with economic

catastrophe, and plan to resurrect the pieces under a new [Democratic Socialist](#) framework.

Consequently, businesses of all sizes, those which have not already been blown away, are preserving capital in order to weather the gathering storm. But their is a glimmer of hope on the horizon.

Twenty five years ago Ronald Reagan warned, "When a business or an individual spends more than it makes, it goes bankrupt. When government does it, it sends you the bill. And when government does it for 40 years, the bill comes in two ways: higher taxes and inflation."

Those were the good old days.

Today, deficit spending has become institutionalized, and the unprecedented debt accumulation enacted by the Obama regime in the last two years has taken the country to the brink of economic collapse. Every American should be concerned about the implications of this debacle, and its impact on the [future of Liberty](#).

It's remarkable how far we've fallen. Just three years ago, [then-Senator Obama](#) was merely a smooth-talking presidential aspirant. But today, only a fool, or Socialist co-conspirator, would deny the threat that the Obama's ideological vision for the future poses to [Essential Liberty](#).

With all that as a backdrop, some really BIG news this week provided a bright ray of hope through the oppressive cloud of budget banter.

While Obama was expressing his support for the economic plan advanced by the Senate's "Gang of Six," a "Gang of 234" in the people's House, under the leadership of Reps. Eric Cantor and Jim Jordan, passed the "Cut, Cap and Balance" bill, which

includes a Balanced Budget Amendment (BBA) to the U.S Constitution.

The proposal cuts \$111 billion from fiscal 2012 spending and caps future spending at 19.9 percent of gross domestic product, with the enticement that if it is passed in the Senate and signed by Obama, the next debt ceiling increase will be allowed.

House leaders are intent on advancing the BBA, but despite the severity of our current economic crisis, it is not likely to receive bi-partisan support in the Democrat-controlled Senate (S.J.Res.10). Speaker of the House John Boehner said, "House Republicans are the only ones to put forward and pass a real plan that will create a better environment for private-sector job growth by stopping Washington from spending money it doesn't have and preventing tax hikes on families and small businesses." He asserted that the BBA would set spending restraints in stone.

One caveat is that under a Democrat administration, with a little help from [judicial diktats](#), the BBA could result in tax *increases* indexed to budget increases. To thwart this threat, the BBA must require a supermajority to raise taxes, a spending cap to keep the "balance" from perpetual increases, a provision to protect it from tax increases forced by judicial diktat, and a provision to ensure it is not construed as to affirm the constitutional authority of current spending programs -- most of which have no such authority.

Predictably, Obama has signaled that he will veto the measure. Clearly, it doesn't comport with his near-term objective of "fundamentally transforming the United States of America." He classified the BBA as "extreme, radical [and] unprecedented," and followed that "neither setting arbitrary spending levels nor amending the Constitution is necessary to restore fiscal responsibility."

For sure, when Obama and his most liberal Senate lapdogs are attacking the BBA, it must be good for America. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid called it "perhaps some of the worst legislation in the history of this country." Barbara Mikulski protested, "What a

sham. What a scam. I'd be tempted to just blow it off if it were not so cruel, stupid and dangerous. ... It could cut, cap and kill the future of our country." Tom Harkin followed, "The sad reality is that America no longer has a two party system. One of our two parties has morphed into a kind of a cult driven by a singular fixation and obsession [the BBA]. This so-called balanced budget amendment would make it all but impossible to raise revenues [taxes] in the future." Babs Boxer lamented, "Why do they cut and cap our hopes and dreams? ... They say, 'don't tax the job creators.' ... [T]hat's just so much bull. Let's put that baby to rest." (All in favor of laying Bab's bull to rest, raise your hand!)

For the record, Article 1, Section 8 of our [Constitution](#) clearly empowers Congress alone to borrow, if necessary, on the credit of the U.S. But Obama will likely claim that the 14th Amendment, notably the so-called "[living constitution](#)" version of that amendment, gives him the power to add \$2.4 trillion to the current \$14.3 trillion in debt.

How ironic it is that Obama may cite the Constitution as the authority by which he can unilaterally raise the debt ceiling by executive order or by invoking other "emergency powers." Indeed, leading conservatives in the Senate and House have expressed concern that Obama is so unflinchingly devoted to his Socialist agenda that he won't budge.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell declared, "[A]fter years of discussions and months of negotiations, I have little question that as long as this president is in the Oval Office, a real solution is unattainable. I was one of those who had hoped we could do something big for the country. But in my view the president has presented us with three choices: smoke and mirrors, tax hikes or default."

Rep. Allen West similarly affirmed, "We have a president that is not willing to do his job ... is digging in his heels, being very intransigent, and he's being a rigid ideologue. He must understand that every single one of his economic policies has failed. It's time that

he realize that he does not have the moral high ground in this argument."

Yet no amount of strident criticism, however accurate, seems capable of dissuading Obama from seeing *his agenda* to completion. He and his Democrat water boys in the Senate will create a gauntlet to ensure a BBA never reaches state legislatures for consideration, while continuing to claim a failure to raise the debt ceiling will lead to catastrophe.

Obama is pushing all the right constituent panic buttons: "I cannot guarantee that Social Security checks will go out" if the debt ceiling is not raised. But the fact is, 60 percent of government expenditures do *not* depend on borrowed funding (read: "borrowed time"), but are covered by tax revenues. The real problem for the Left is that if the debt ceiling is not raised, they will actually have to prioritize what bills will be paid. I can assure you Democrats will be sending Social Security checks and paying military salaries rather than funding Obama's boondoggle "stimulus" projects.

Democrats have a clear record of opposing any and all efforts to constitutionally constrain central government spending. Our colleagues at the Heritage Foundation have published an excellent [BBA history](#) outlining Democrat opposition. Their resistance to the current BBA will be no less formidable, but that notwithstanding, it remains our best hope for restraining federal spending.

We have pushed for a BBA since *The Patriot Post's* inception, most recently with a petition [appeal to then-President George W. Bush](#) when Republicans had control of the executive and both houses of the legislative branch. More recently, we proposed a BBA again as a key component of [The Patriot Declaration](#).

We wholeheartedly support the current attempt to force Democrats controlling the Senate to pass the "cut and cap" BBA, but we remain far too clear-eyed to expect Democrats now, or ever, to willingly

implement constraints on spending. It may be too little too late, but we must continue to fight for fiscal sanity on every front.

And we must also note this inescapable and incontrovertible truth: If the majority of elected legislators would honor the limits of a BBA as written into the Constitution, we wouldn't need a BBA because they would already be in possession of sufficient integrity to honor the extreme limits our Constitution places upon what objects the Legislative Branch is authorized to expend.

If there now existed among legislators a proper regard for their oaths to "[support and defend](#)" our Constitution's enshrinement of [Essential Liberty](#), no BBA would be necessary. Nor would we now be subject to a chronic national budget crisis that threatens the future of American Liberty and free enterprise.

Finally, in regard to debt ceilings, we find ourselves in agreement with Obama, at least in regard to his comments on 20 March 2006. Then-Senator Obama had this to say when voting in opposition to raising the debt ceiling: "The fact that we are here today to debate raising America's debt limit is a sign of leadership failure. It is a sign that the U.S. government can't pay its own bills. It is a sign that we now depend on ongoing financial assistance from foreign countries to finance our government's reckless fiscal policies. ... Increasing America's debt weakens us domestically and internationally. Leadership means that 'the buck stops here.' Instead, Washington is shifting the burden of bad choices today onto the backs of our children and grandchildren. America has a debt problem and a failure of leadership. Americans deserve better."

(To express your support for the BBA, please contact your Senator by phone: 202.224.3121 While you're at it, give Obama a call: 202.456.1414)