



# Coalition Letter to Congress: Principled Leadership on the Matter of Debt and Spending

September 4, 2017

Dear Members of Congress:

That rarest of political outcomes – sound policy that represents a win-win scenario for normally divergent factions – is possible as the budget process moves forward.

We're writing to ask your help in achieving that by advancing longstanding balanced budget amendment proposals and House Concurrent Resolution 73 (H.Con.Res. 73), together with the House's budget.

Why this legislation and why now? Some political facts:

- Decades of polling show supermajority support – whether you're in a deep-red district, a moderate community or an urban blue zone – for a balanced federal budget.
- Congress has, for more than 40 years, debated the pros and cons of a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution, bringing up dozens of legitimate concerns.

### WHY NOW?

**Our nation is facing a fiscal crisis.** With \$20 trillion in gross federal debt and \$200 trillion or more in unfunded liabilities, experts recently agreed at House and Senate Judiciary Committee hearings that our nation risks a sovereign debt crisis.

Excessive federal borrowing risks more than economic or fiscal calamity – it is the civil rights issue of this century. By sending our children and future generations the bill for our policy choices, we deny them the right of self-governance; tax them without representation; and deprive them of policy choices as interest payments consume more and more revenues.

As an economic, fiscal *and* civil rights issue, it is essential that the federal budget return to balance as soon as possible.

### H.Con.Res. 73: THE RIGHT SOLUTION AT THE RIGHT TIME

We commend the House Budget Committee and the President for proposing a budget plan that balances within ten years. While ratification of just about any balanced budget amendment would be a step forward, the passage of H.Con.Res. 73 is an especially plausible route to a win-win policy outcome.

Alone among balanced budget amendment policy solutions, passing H.Con.Res. 73 only requires **simple majority support**. It would allow Congress to partner with the states in advancing, proposing and ratifying the state-of-the-art Balanced Budget Amendment Alaska, Arizona, Georgia, Mississippi and North Dakota have already embraced. This game-changing BBA has been specifically designed to overcome concerns expressed in 40 years of congressional hearings about how a BBA should be drafted.

Passage of H.Con.Res. 73 would present a win-win policy outcome for all sides, providing critical momentum for the remaining states to join the Compact for a Balanced Budget and enabling the proposal and ratification of a BBA that would commit Congress and the President to achieving a balanced budget according to their longstanding 10-year plans.





Crucially, the passage of H.Con.Res. 73 would allow the President and Congress to rightly contend that they are committed to fundamental fiscal reform.

For this reason, we commend the House Budget Committee for including Section 501 in its budget resolution, which endorses adding a balanced budget requirement to the Constitution and spotlights the Compact for a Balanced Budget.

To advance the policy prescription in Section 501 of the budget resolution in the House, we recommend:

- **updating this section to reflect that H.Con.Res. 73** was officially introduced on July 26, 2017; and
- **incorporating the language of H.Con.Res. 73 into the House’s budget resolution itself.** Passage would still require only a majority vote as opposed to the two-thirds required for balanced budget amendment proposals made by members of Congress.

This would establish a strong enforcement mechanism, sustaining the budget resolution following its adoption. It would also strengthen the appeal of the budget resolution to fiscal hawks.

**We are asking for – and the country needs – your principled leadership on this issue.** We hope you will agree that H.Con.Res. 73 represents a path that acknowledges the need for long-term fiscal sustainability while also meeting shorter-term political and policy needs.

Sincerely,

**Mead Treadwell**, Chair (AK), **Rep. Paulette Rakestraw**, Vice Chair (GA), **Speaker Pro Tem Greg Snowden**, Commissioner (MS), Compact for a Balanced Budget Commission

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*\*Signed only in an individual capacity; reference to title and affiliation is for informational purposes only.*