

**TESTIMONY
OF
PAUL SISK**

**GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE
OHIO HOUSE
COLUMBUS, OHIO**

LEGISLATIVE HEARING ON H.J.R. 2

Chair Hall, Vice Chair Ferguson, Ranking Member Humphrey, and members of the committee, my name is Paul Sisk, and I live in Hamilton, Ohio, House District 55.

According to the US Treasury, the federal government is now nearly \$37 trillion in debt. That's over \$320,000 per taxpayer.¹ Ten years ago, the federal debt was just \$18 trillion, half of what it is now. The debt is now about 125% of the gross domestic product, a level not seen since the conclusion of World War II when the United States government was expending all available resources to fight a world war on 2 fronts.² Without a doubt, the federal debt is a national security risk.

Fiscal year 1997 was the last time that all appropriation bills were completed by Congress before the start of a fiscal year.³ The use of continuing resolutions and omnibus spending bills has become the new norm by which Congress conducts its' financial business. This approach is lazy, irresponsible and hides pork, waste and influence peddling.

Last year the annual interest on outstanding debt exceeded 1 trillion dollars for the first time, more than the entire defense budget. Just while I deliver my testimony today, the federal debt will accumulate about \$10 million in new interest.

The current federal administration is working to cut waste and fraud from the federal budget, yet we know from history that all these efforts could be completely reversed with the next administration.

Only through amendments to the Constitution can we force the federal government to take fiscal responsibility seriously year in and year out. Consider the following common-sense constitutional amendments that could help restore fiscal sanity to our nation's capital through passage of HJR2.

Amendment #1: Balanced budget with limits on taxation: Congress could be required to submit a budget to the president by a specified date, such as the first Monday in May. Unless a budget is signed into law by the first day of the fiscal year, an automatic, across-the-board reduction in expenditures could be made mandatory. Total expenditures could be limited as a percentage of the gross domestic product average over the past 3 years. In cases of national

¹ <https://usdebtclock.org/>

² <https://www.longtermtrends.net/us-debt-to-gdp/>

³ <http://tinyurl.com/worst-since-second-world-war>

emergency, such as war, a one-year suspension of the balanced budget rule could be made through a 3/5 or 2/3 vote by roll call in both chambers of Congress.

A balanced budget amendment is very popular with the American public. For the past 50 years, about 75% of Americans have supported it.⁴ This is not controversial, it's mainstream and long overdue.

Amendment #2: One-subject, one bill: Limiting each congressional bill to a single topic would reduce spending immediately, as legislators could no longer bury special favors and pork spending in multi-thousand-page incomprehensible omnibus bills. It would also allow voters to hold their legislators accountable. Michael Farris, a co-founder of Convention of States, gave testimony here last year and explained how a “one subject, one bill” amendment could be given enforcement “teeth” by explicitly defining who has taxpayer standing to challenge violations of a “one subject, one bill” rule.

Amendment #3: Require federal departments and agencies to be reauthorized by Congress every 3 years or be retired: Such a requirement would force Congress to prune the financial apple tree, as it were, every 3 years. Unless there is consensus in the House and Senate that a federal department or agency still makes financial sense for the American taxpayer, it would automatically be retired and all the associated costs.

These are just 3 examples of the kind of amendments that could be proposed at an Article V Convention of the States. Any such amendment would only become part of our Constitution if 38 state legislatures, both the House and Senate, voted in support.

Please support HJR2 to help bring permanent fiscal responsibility to our federal government so that our country can have a stable and prosperous financial future for generations to come. Thank you.

⁴ Crosby, A. and Holbrook, A.L. (2019), Public Support for a Balanced Budget Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: Trends and Predictors. *Public Budgeting & Finance*, 39: 44-67. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pbaf.12213>