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From the desk of:
Riordan McClain
State Representative

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Humphrey, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to present HJR 3 to you today. The gravity and importance of this topic cannot be understated, and I thank you in advance for the thoughtful consideration that you will give it. It is my opinion that to save and preserve our great union, we must go down this difficult path.

I am here today again to urge this body to join the growing number of states in this great union to call a Convention of States under Article V of the US Constitution.

I have come to this position reluctantly, with much research, deliberation, and prayer.

This provision in Article V was placed into our constitution in case of emergency, as a position of last legal resort. For those opposed to using this provision as to the perfection of our constitution, this provision was written into said document. It is there in the case that the Federal Government would become too expansive, too intrusive, and too unaccountable to the states.

Well, I argue to you all today that the Federal Government is too expansive, too intrusive, and too unaccountable to the states. I would bet at some point over the course of the last few presidential administrations, that there have been at least a few times you personally viewed the actions coming out of D.C. as authoritarian. This is not about partisan differences; this is about state sovereignty. Think about how often we discuss bills in this house and come to a point where we find that we will lose federal funds unless we perform x, y, and z. Dependency on federal funds cannot be an option.

HJR 3 would join Ohio to an ongoing call for a Convention of States to be called under Article V of the Constitution of the United States. Article V is an important constitutional tool that our founders created for states to hold our federal government accountable. The size and scope of the federal government has grown consistently throughout our history with more and more responsibility being abdicated by Congress to federal agency rule making and executive orders. It has long been unsustainable, and we have waited long enough for Congress to fix itself.

Our government was always meant to be bottom up, not top down. Our Federal Government was supposed to have very limited powers yet has amassed more and more than our founders ever envisioned.

For this process to be initiated, 34 states (2/3 of the states) must pass a resolution such as this one within the same subject matter. Once 34 states have done so, Congress must call a Convention in which each state sends its own delegates to attend. After deliberation and debate, each state delegation receives one vote on any proposed amendment at the Convention. Proposed amendments germane to the call require a simple majority vote (26) of states to pass. The process is not over then, but the passed amendments must then be ratified by 38 of the states (3/4 of the states). This process is not easy and

cannot be partisan. To amend the US Constitution, you need VERY broad support. It is protected from partisan, divisive attempts to amend.

HJR 3 calls an amending convention limited to proposing amendments that:

- Impose fiscal restraints on the federal government
- Limit the power and jurisdiction of the federal government
- Limit the terms of office for its officials and Members of Congress of the United States

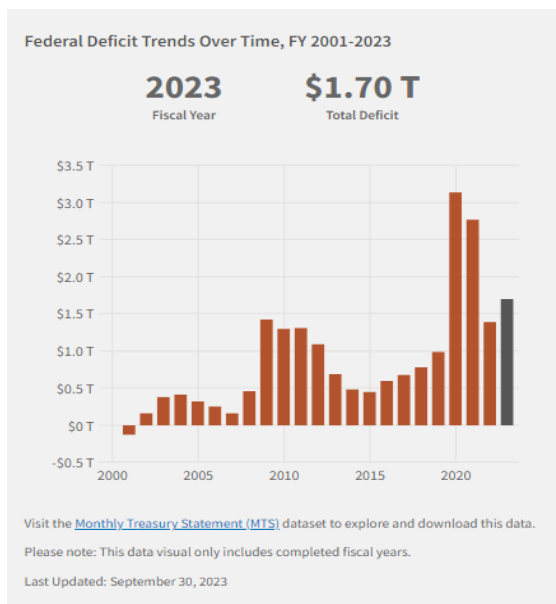
HJR 3 is incredibly important to Ohio and to the future of the United States of America. We have watched as the Federal Government and Washington D.C. has steadily grown, control, and wealth. This is not a political partisan debate, but rather one of the only mechanisms to restore balance of state rights.

On the fiscal restraints issue, otherwise known as a balanced budget amendment (which as you all know we in Ohio rightly must comply with):

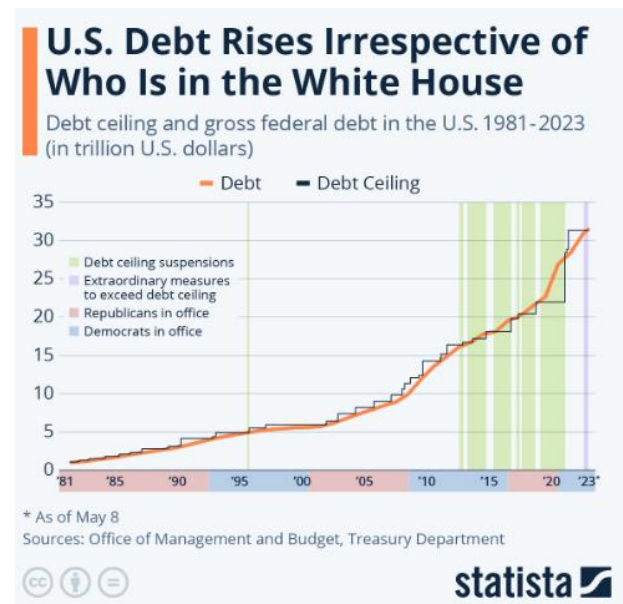
In just the last 4 years, we have added roughly \$9 trillion to our national debt with budget deficits alone.

- In 2020 alone the government spent \$6.6 trillion while its revenue was only \$3.4 trillion. (\$3.2 trillion deficit)
- In 2021 we spent \$6.8 trillion with revenues of \$4 trillion. (\$2.8 trillion deficit)
- In 2022 we spent \$6.5 trillion with revenues of \$5 trillion. (\$1.5 trillion deficit)
- In 2023 we spent \$6.1 trillion with revenues of \$4.4 trillion. (\$1.7 trillion deficit)

In fact, over the last 50 years our Federal Government has run a fiscal year deficit 45 times, the last time we had a budget surplus federally was FY 2001. Over 23 years ago.



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¹ <https://fiscaldata.treasury.gov/americas-finance-guide/national-deficit/#:~:text=Since%202001%2C%20the%20federal%20government's,the%20growth%20of%20federal%20revenue.>

² <https://www.statista.com/chart/1505/americas-debt-ceiling-dilemma/>

We cannot continue at this pace. When I gave sponsor testimony two years ago, we are at \$28.8 trillion US National Debt. Today we currently stand at \$33.7 trillion³.

Within the next 5 years, the interest payment alone on our debt will exceed over 1 trillion per year and will be one of the largest federal expenditures, likely passing our defense spending. Simply put, this is not sustainable. To think that our fiat currency, the US dollar, is invincible is a fool's errand and if we do not change course to sound monetary policy the consequences will be severe.

The only time in recent history that Congress addressed spending issues was in the 90's following a concerted state's effort to call a convention in the 80's regarding the budget. Led by then President Reagan which received momentum and nearly 34 states initiated a call before congress acted.

At that time even a then Senator from Delaware named Joe Biden raised economic disaster alarms about the deficits and worked across the aisle to restore restraints to the federal government spending. Without the continued pressure those years were few and Congress quickly went back to spending unabated.

We believe it is imperative to the ongoing success of this great nation for Ohio join the list of 19 other states (listed below) that have already passed this resolution to hold the federal government accountable. At my last sponsor testimony 15 states had passed this call, in the subsequent 2 years, 4 additional states have passed this resolution: Wisconsin, Nebraska, West Virginia, and South Carolina.

I will conclude with the words from President Reagan in a letter to Lew Uhler back in 1994.

*"Lew it is clear that we must rely on the states to force Congress to act. . . **Fortunately, our Nation's Founders gave us the means to amend the Constitution through action of state legislatures, which you have been widely pursuing.** . . Unless we act quickly, the people in the White House and those running Congress will bankrupt America. The good, honest productive people of America are frightened—and angry. They must get behind you in this effort. Our opportunity has never been greater."*⁴

Those words were written nearly 30 years and nearly \$29 trillion less in debt ago.

Reagan ended his letter as I'll end with you "As I have said before: If not now, when? And if not us, who?"

It is my hope that this committee will give this proposal the serious consideration that it deserves. It's time the states force Congress to act in this regard and if they won't, we must.

Again, thank you for the opportunity. I will now pass to Rep. Willis.

³ <https://fiscaldata.treasury.gov/americas-finance-guide/national-debt/> - recorded on 11/12/2023

⁴ <https://letusvoteforfra.org/app/uploads/2023/02/Reagan-Letter-1994.pdf>

List of 19 states who have enacted this matching call:

1. Alabama
2. Alaska
3. Arizona
4. Arkansas
5. Florida
6. Georgia
7. Indiana
8. Louisiana
9. Mississippi
10. Missouri
11. Oklahoma
12. Nebraska
13. North Dakota
14. South Carolina
15. Tennessee
16. Texas
17. Utah
18. West Virginia
19. Wisconsin
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