

EXPRESSION OF APPRECIATION

(Mr. WATTS of Oklahoma asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WATTS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, I am honored and delighted to be here this afternoon. Some of you, some of my colleagues, know what I have gone through over the last 4 or 5 months, and especially over the last 2 weeks, to get here and to make this reality. I appreciate Speaker GINGRICH working with my office and with me to make this reality. I am delighted to be here.

Mr. Speaker, I do not have a whole lot to say. I have said a lot to this point and I have been reading a lot and have been studying a lot, and I am looking forward to getting on with the business of this great country and the business of the Fourth District of Oklahoma.

So thank you very much for your patience, for allowing to make this swearing in, which is belated, and for allowing me to make this event a reality today.

With that I will close, and again say thank you very much.

INCLUDE UNFUNDED MANDATE LANGUAGE IN BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT

(Ms. MCCARTHY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, as the immediate past president of the National Conference of State Legislatures, I am very concerned that our move toward a balanced Federal budget could result in more unfunded mandates for the States, if Congress decides not to reduce program services to march reduced expenditures.

Any reductions in the Federal share of funding for mandated programs would seriously increase the fiscal burdens on the States.

I agree with the National Conference of State Legislatures that the Federal Government should not attempt to accomplish national goals through unfunded mandates on State and local governments.

The NCSL has proposed amendment language to the pending balanced budget measure now before the Judiciary Committee which states that:

Except as necessary to enforce obligations to individuals under amendments to this Constitution, Congress shall not impose any obligations upon the States without providing the funds necessary for compliance; nor shall Congress impose any conditions upon spending grants to the States unless such conditions are necessary to specify the manner in which the funds are expended.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to include this language in the balanced budget amendment.

GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

(Mr. GOSS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, the wave of reform is moving through this House. On opening day we made good on our pledge to start changing the way we conduct the Nation's business. Now we are getting down to the business of change to shrink the Federal Government and restore fiscal sanity. The streamlined committees of this House are already hard at work on a balanced budget amendment, a true line-item veto for the President, and a mechanism to stop unfunded mandates from crippling our State and local governments. We have pledged to cut spending and realign our Federal priorities—and we are going to fulfill that commitment. We will not be distracted by the diversionary or dilatory tactics of yesterday's powerbrokers—things have changed around here and Americans can once again trust their elected Representatives to do what we have said we will do.

THE PROPOSED BALANCED BUDGET CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

(Mr. TUCKER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. TUCKER. Mr. Speaker, Ross Perot was right when he said "The devil is in the details."

My constituents have indicated to me that they do not support a balanced budget amendment and that the Republican majority is moving too fast on this issue.

In a shocking statement the new majority leader said on "Meet the Press":

Once Members of Congress know exactly, chapter and verse, the pain the Government must live with in order to get a balanced government, their knees will buckle.

Well, let us be honest about the cuts, the American public demands that we are.

The Republican majority needs to listen to the public on this issue. They don't want a constitutional amendment forcing a balanced budget.

If the Republicans expect the American people to agree to their program, they had better spell out the plan. The people want to know the details, and how the Republican plan will impact them.

WEEK TWO—THE BALANCED BUDGET

(Mr. BARR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BARR. Mr. Speaker, last week was a great and important beginning to a new way of doing the people's business in Washington. In a record-breaking first day of the session, we demonstrated that unlike the politicians who merely talk the talk, we

walk the walk. We have put the brakes on the tax raisers, cut committees and staff, and taken the steps necessary to bring this House under the same laws that govern the conduct of the citizens who sent us here. For the first time in decades, this House is being brought into order.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we must set to work immediately to bring the Government's fiscal house in order. Our Nation suffers under a multitrillion-dollar debt. Each and every dollar of that debt had its source in this House, which under the Constitution is the only body authorized to initiate spending bills. The interest to finance this public debt approaches \$250 billion each year, which is enough to fund the entire current defense budget of the country.

This fiscal irresponsibility is about to stop, Mr. Speaker. The balanced budget amendment, which is a critical provision of the Contract With America, will be taken up by this body shortly. There is not a moment to lose in doing all we can to assure its swift consideration and passage. Our future, and, more important, the future of our children and grandchildren, depend upon our ability to deliver on this promise to America.

GOPAC SHOULD OPEN ITS BOOKS

(Mr. BONIOR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, this morning we saw one more example of why GOPAC needs to come clean.

This morning, the New York Times ran an interview with the Republicans' newly appointed House historian. This is a person who has served as an adviser to Republicans.

Yet when asked about GOPAC, not only did she say that GOPAC was founded, and I quote, as "a way of getting around campaign finance disclosure laws," she also called for abolishing most disclosure laws that are on the books today.

Is this the best the Republicans can do: to appoint a historian who champions secrecy? Who thinks Congress should roll back campaign finance laws?

Mr. Speaker, GOPAC is an organization that has raised up to \$20 million the past 9 years, and played a role in over 100 Republican campaigns.

Yet we don't know where this money came from, or who contributed because they refuse to reveal the names of past donors.

I would suggest if these charges aren't true, and if GOPAC has nothing to hide, it should come clean, where the \$20 million came from.

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BEGGING THE QUESTION

(Mr. BALLENGER asked and was given permission to address the House

for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, we are hearing an awful lot of griping from the defenders of big government these days. With the balanced budget amendment on the verge of passage in the House, there are Democrats who still oppose this important government reform. They are attempting to derail the amendment by disingenuously demanding to know how we plan on spending each and every penny in the year 2002.

Well, it is amazing they can look across a kitchen table at ordinary Americans without turning red from embarrassment. Their argument against a balanced budget amendment is essentially: "We don't want to cut government spending. Period."

As American businesses continue to tighten their belts, as a American families watch their paychecks shrink and their children's future become ever darker under the long shadow of government's growing debt, the defenders of big government are digging in. They talk a lot about working families but they refuse to life a finger to save America's middle class from government's out-of-control spending.

The Republican contract with America is our commitment to cut the size score, and cost of government. The balanced budget amendment will forever guarantee that Congress of the future will never again be allowed to spend our children into the near bottomless pit of debt we are in today.

THE HOUSE HISTORIAN'S OFFICE

(Mr. WYNN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WYNN. Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to comment on the sad situation affecting the House Historian's Office. In December, around Christmastime, I read with dismay that the House Historian would be disbanded as another so-called cost-saving measure. But lo and behold, on December 30, it was stated by the Speaker that the office would, in fact, remain. Unfortunately he neglected to disclose that he had already selected the person, a highly partisan supporter of his, who had actually already moved into a suburban Washington townhouse.

Not only do we have a highly partisan Historian, we are also going to have her husband as a paid chronicler. Perhaps there is another book deal in the works, but the most outrageous aspect of this whole situation is the fact that this Historian opposes a disclosure.

Most historians want more information to broaden history. This Historian says she favors secret side contributions and opposes our current Federal election disclosure laws in order to protect GOPC, to protect large contributors who want to contribute behind closed doors.

The Republicans have gone out of their way to say, we are not going to have business as usual. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, it appears, based on the evidence of the Historian's Office, that we are not going to have business as usual. We are going to have business that is worse.

HONORING COMMITMENTS

(Mr. CHAMBLISS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the House for the first time as a Member of the House of Representatives.

I am very encouraged by what has taken place in this body in its first days, and if it is any indication of what is to come for the next 2 years, we will be well on our way toward achieving what the American people sent us here to accomplish.

I am particularly encouraged by the aggressive agenda pursued thus far. The majority party made a contract with the people of this country, and as its first acts, we accomplished a very significant portion of that contract.

For my part, I also made commitments, commitments to the people of Georgia's Eighth District. As my first official act, I signed on as original co-sponsor of Mr. BARTON's balanced budget legislation. I also signed a pledge to the people of the Eighth District to refuse any future automatic congressional pay raises with instructions to apply the funds to the reduction of this Nation's debt.

Mr. Speaker, on November 8, the people of this country spoke. We should all be encouraged that this body has received the message.

THE BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT

(Mr. FARR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, I support a balanced budget.

I support deficit reduction. I support bringing entitlements under control and eliminating every bit of fat there is in the budget. What I do not support is gimmickry to do it, stealth budgets to get there, or slash and burn tactics to achieve it.

The balanced budget amendment to the Constitution has been sold as the panacea to all our fiscal woes.

Most of us know that it doesn't work that way. There is no balance in a balanced budget amendment.

An amendment doesn't automatically balance the budget. Spending cuts and tax revenues do. Congress has been working to balance the budget for the past 2 years without an amendment.

The new dialog supporting a balanced budget amendment is a way for legislators to avoid the responsibility of making the tough decisions. I don't believe in trying to escape my duties through a legislative "escape clause" and urge my colleagues to reject the balanced budget amendment until it can be shown how to get there.

MORE ON THE BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT

(Mr. SCARBOROUGH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SCARBOROUGH. Mr. Speaker, for 40 years, the Democrats have had control of this Nation's checkbook. For 40 years, they have failed miserably to do what middle class Americans have had to do and have failed miserably to do what State legislatures across this country have had to do, and that is to balance their checkbook.

Now with a fantastic opportunity to do that in the next few months by passing the balanced budget amendment, all they give us is smoke and mirrors and bring up GOPAC or ask us to name every penny that we are going to spend over the next 40 years to balance the budget. It is nothing but smoke and mirrors.

I am honored and proud to be part of a movement that is finally going to bring fiscal responsibility to this House after 40 miserable years of failure.

BALANCING THE BUDGET

(Mrs. SEASTRAND asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. SEASTRAND. Mr. Speaker, many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have been arguing that we must specifically outline how we are going to balance the budget before we pass a constitutional amendment mandating one. They claim to be supporters of the idea of a balanced budget but because in the past they have been unwilling to make the tough decisions necessary to balance the budget they assume that we are unwilling to as well.

Unfortunately for them, this House has a new keeper and new priorities. Among these new priorities is a balanced budget.

The simple fact is this: Recent polls indicate that more than 75 percent of American people support the balanced budget amendment. It is the will of the people and Mr. Speaker, this is the people's House. And for most of the last 40 years this House has failed them. The balanced budget amendment creates a mechanism to accomplish this necessary goal. The debate must and will begin after our new priorities have been set.