

THE INTRODUCTION OF A BIPARTISAN BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES

HON. BOB GOODLATTE

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 3, 2017

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, as of today, the current debt of the United States is reaching almost \$20 trillion. The national debt per taxpayer is about \$166,800. For comparison, a recent report by the Census Bureau stated that median household income was just under \$57,000.

It's clear that we are in dire straits. The States understand the gravity of this issue and for decades have been enacting policies that align their own spending with debt. Indeed, 49 states have a balanced budget provision that applies to their own budget. Furthermore, 27 states have already called for a constitutional convention to consider a balanced budget amendment to the United States Constitution.

This Congress provides renewed opportunity for this body to consider such a provision. Given the difficult fiscal decisions that inevitably lie ahead, our actions must be grounded in commonsense policies that are constitutionally required. This amendment provides the necessary foundation.

This balanced budget amendment is the same language that passed the House with bipartisan support in 1995 and fell only one vote short in the Senate. It is the only balanced budget proposal to achieve the support of a majority of the Members of the House of Representatives. The amendment forces Congress to live within its means by ensuring that total federal spending does not exceed total revenues.

This amendment is identical to the balanced budget amendment considered in the House of Representatives in the 112th Congress, which received 261 bipartisan votes when it came to the House Floor. It requires that Congress not spend more than it receives in revenues. It also requires a true majority of each chamber to pass tax increases and a three-fifths majority to raise the debt limit. Last Congress, 110 cosponsors signed onto the resolution.

A strong majority of Americans support a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. After all, they know what it means to live by a budget and they rightfully expect the federal government to do the same. They are asking Congress to work together to ensure that this amendment, which is so critical to the future of our country, becomes a reality.

CELEBRATING WYNNEBROOK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 3, 2017

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Wynnebrook Elementary School, a public elementary school located in West Palm Beach, Florida, on the occasion of its 50th Anniversary. Principal Mrs. Suzanne Berry and

Assistant Principal Mr. Steve Collins, continue in the path of the outstanding educators that came before them over Wynnebrook Elementary's half century of existence. Impressively, Wynnebrook Elementary has had only five Principals since its start.

Currently, 876 students attend Wynnebrook. The student body is diverse with forty-six percent Hispanic, forty-three percent African American and nine percent White. Ninety-four percent of Wynnebrook students are on free or reduced price lunches and the school has received an "A" grade for 14 years in a row. It is ranked 19th among 124 elementary schools in the Palm Beach School District, with a 2016 calculated average standard test score of 86.92.

Wynnebrook has been the recipient of many awards. In 2011 and 2016, the school won the Exceeding Expectations Project Award from the East Coast Technical Assistance Center (ECTAC). Last year, Mr. Jeffrey Pegg, immediate past principal, won the 2016 Principal Leadership Award given by Florida TaxWatch.

Mr. Speaker, I am so very proud that Wynnebrook Elementary is located in my Congressional district. I am honored to recognize them on the House floor and congratulate all those who have made Wynnebrook Elementary such a wonderful school over the last 50 years. All principals, teachers, students and volunteers should not only be proud of the impressive work they are doing today, but also exceedingly proud of their storied history. I wish them many more years of continued success.

INTRODUCTION OF THE BANKRUPTCY JUDGESHIP ACT OF 2017

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 3, 2017

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, the "Bankruptcy Judgeship Act of 2017," authorizes 6 additional permanent bankruptcy judgeships and converts 16 temporary bankruptcy judgeships to permanent status, based on recommendation of the Judicial Conference of the United States. With respect to the 6 additional permanent bankruptcy judgeships, they are authorized pursuant to section 3 of the bill as follows: 2 for the District of Delaware; 2 for the Eastern District of Michigan; and 2 for the Middle District of Florida. With respect to the 16 conversions, they are authorized pursuant to section 2 of the bill for the following districts:

- 5 for the District of Delaware;
- 2 for the Southern District of Florida;
- 3 for the District of Maryland;
- 1 for the Eastern District of Michigan;
- 1 for the District of Nevada;
- 1 for the Eastern District of North Carolina;
- 2 for the District of Puerto Rico;
- 1 for the Western District of Tennessee; and
- 1 for the Eastern District of Virginia.

This legislation responds to a serious need. Since the last time additional bankruptcy judgeships were authorized, which was 10 years ago, the 6 districts that would be authorized additional judicial resources by this bill have experienced a 55 percent increase in weighted filings, according to the Judicial Conference.

All 16 of the temporary bankruptcy judgeships that the bill converts to permanent status

are set to lapse as of May 25, 2017. As the Conference observes, "These bankruptcy courts would face a serious and, in many cases, debilitating workload crisis if their temporary judgeships were to expire."

The need for these additional judicial resources is based on a comprehensive analysis performed by the Judicial Conference based on a formal survey of all judicial circuits conducted pursuant to section 152(b)(2) of title 28 of the United States Code. Criteria considered include the workload of each court, case filing statistics, and geographic factors, among other matters.

TRIBUTE TO HONOR FIRST RESPONDER JEFF SIMPSON FOR HIS SACRIFICE AND SERVICE TO OUR NATION

HON. ROBERT J. WITTMAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 3, 2017

Mr. WITTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Mr. Jeff Simpson, a September 11 first responder who selflessly sacrificed his life aiding his fellow Americans. Jeff will be remembered for his compassion, his bravery, and his love of community and country.

Jeff was a fully certified Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) and a member of the Dumfries Triangle Rescue Squad in Triangle, Virginia. Volunteering with the local ambulance on nights and weekends was Jeff's passion. His family and friends remember Jeff stopping to help others in highway accidents and listening to emergency calls in his down time to help his neighbors. Jeff never went anywhere without his "rescue bag" and would always sidetrack his plans to help someone in need.

Jeff worked for Oracle Corporation, and on September 11, 2001, was on assignment approximately five blocks from the World Trade Center. The sound of the first plane crashing into the North Tower caused the meeting Jeff was in to be cancelled and the building to be evacuated. After seeing the second plane hit the Second Tower, Jeff knew he had to help. A coworker remembers Jeff saying, "There is not a fire department in the world that can handle a situation like this, I'm going to help." Jeff was last seen running toward the North Tower.

Six months after the September 11 attacks, Jeff's remains were finally located at the structure. Jeff was with 12 other New York City Fire Department and New York Port Authority personnel where it is believed the group established a triage area to care for those who'd been injured in the attack.

Jeff Simpson's sacrifice and servant leadership led to him posthumously receiving one of the first Public Safety awards established by Governor Warner and to be recognized by the National Association of Rescue Squads in 2003. Rescue Station 23 in Prince William County was dedicated to Jeff Simpson in 2010 because of how well he lived out the creed, "We Serve to Save." On September 9th, 2016, the Town of Dumfries named their Community Center the Jeff Simpson Community and Cultural Arts Center in dedication to Jeff and in gratitude of his life and service to his community and country.

Today, I have the honor of remembering Jeff Simpson and celebrating his legacy. Jeff

embodies everything that is great about the American people, selflessly using the talents that each of us possess to aid and care for each other. I dedicate this to Jeff and to his wife Diane and his three children, Max, Elaine, and Leeann. Thank you, Diane, for continuing to share Jeff Simpson's legacy with all of us.

INTRODUCTION OF THE STOPPING ABUSIVE STUDENT LOAN COLLECTION PRACTICES IN BANKRUPTCY ACT OF 2017

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 3, 2017

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, the “Stopping Abusive Student Loan Collection Practices in Bankruptcy Act of 2017” targets ruthless collection tactics employed by some student loan creditors against debtors who have sought bankruptcy relief.

Specifically, my legislation bill would empower a bankruptcy judge to award costs and reasonable attorney’s fees to a debtor who successfully obtained the discharge of his or her liability for a student loan debt based on undue hardship if: (1) the creditor’s position was not substantially justified, and (2) there are no special circumstances that would make such award unjust. The Bankruptcy Code already grants identical authority to a bankruptcy judge to award costs and reasonable attorney’s fees to debtor where a creditor requests the determination of dischargeability of a consumer debt based on the allegation that it was fraudulently incurred and the court thereafter finds that the creditor’s position was not substantially justified and there are no special circumstances that would make such award unjust.

Although parties typically do and should pay their own attorney’s fees in litigation, dischargeability determinations concerning student loan debts present compelling factors that warrant the relief provided by this legislation. Under current bankruptcy law, debtors must meet a very high burden of proof, namely, that repayment of the student loan debt will present an undue hardship on the debtor and the debtor’s dependents. The litigation typically requires extensive discovery, trial-like procedures, and legal analysis.

Unfortunately, some student loan debt collectors engage in abusive litigation tactics that exponentially drive up the potential cost of legal representation for a debtor. As a result, debtors, who may legally qualify for the Bankruptcy Code’s undue hardship dischargeability exception for student loans, may be unable to obtain such relief because of the potential risk of excessive and unaffordable legal fees that the debtor may have to incur not only to meet the high standard of proof, but also to combat an abusive litigation stance taken by a well-funded adversary.

The “Stopping Abusive Student Loan Collection Practices in Bankruptcy Act of 2017” will help level the playing field for debtors overwhelmed by student loan debts, the repayment of which would present an undue hardship for themselves and their families. It is my hope that should this measure become law, bankruptcy judges will not hesitate to award debtors attorney’s fees in appropriate

cases of abusive litigation engaged in by student loan creditors.

TAX CODE TERMINATION ACT

HON. BOB GOODLATTE

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 3, 2017

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to re-introduce the Tax Code Termination Act, legislation that will abolish the Internal Revenue Code by December 31, 2021, and call on Congress to approve a new federal tax system by July of the same year.

Back home in the Sixth Congressional District of Virginia and across America, folks want Congress to address real problems facing our nation—problems like our broken tax code. Today’s tax code is needlessly complex, unfair, discourages savings and investment, and creates uncertainty and added costs for business and families attempting to comply. In November, the American people sent a clear message to Washington—it’s time for change.

I applaud the efforts of my colleagues to make changes to our tax system and finally institute a new system. The discussion draft released by former Ways and Means Chairman Dave Camp in the 113th Congress and the work of Chairman BRADY and the Speaker’s Tax Reform Taskforce in the 114th Congress, prove that there has already been a movement afoot in Congress to take on this monstrosity. Now is the ideal time to finally act.

My bill complements these efforts by setting a date-certain for sunsetting our current tax code to provide the focus we need to debate and finally enact the kind of comprehensive tax reform the American people deserve. Once the Tax Code Termination Act becomes law, today’s tax code would survive only through December 2021, at which time it would expire and be replaced with a new tax code that will be determined by Congress, and the American people.

Under the Tax Code Termination Act, Congress would have four years to debate various tax proposals, ultimately replacing our current tax system with a new system that applies a low rate to all Americans, provides tax relief for working Americans, protects the rights of taxpayers and reduces collection abuses, eliminates the bias against savings and investment, promotes economic growth and job creation, and does not penalize marriage or families.

This legislation has gained wide support in past Congresses and had 144 bipartisan co-sponsors in the 114th Congress. In fact, similar legislation has already been passed twice by the House of Representatives, first in 1998 and again in 2000.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and comprehensive tax reform. The American people deserve policies that promote a flourishing economy and a tax code that treats them as owners of this democratic republic, not customers of it. A new simplified and fairer tax code will do just that and a date certain for having such a system will ensure we deliver on our promises.

INTRODUCTION OF A BILL TO PROTECT THE PRIVACY OF CONSUMERS AND REDUCE THEIR VULNERABILITY TO IDENTITY THEFT

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 3, 2017

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, today, I am introducing the “Cyber Privacy Fortification Act of 2017.” This bill would provide criminal penalties for the failure to comply with federal or state obligations to report security breaches of the sensitive personally identifiable information of individuals. Certain breaches would also be required to be reported to the FBI or the Secret Service. The bill would also require federal agencies engaged in rulemaking related to personally identifiable information to publish privacy impact statements relating to the impact of the proposed rule.

One of the main motivators for cybercrime and computer network intrusions is financial gain. Intrusions into networks of financial institutions and businesses may yield information, often on a large scale, about customers such as credit and debit card numbers, Social Security numbers, birth dates, account passwords, and other personally identifiable information. Information obtained through such data breaches may be used to steal from the accounts of the customers, use their credit cards, hack into their personal communications, or the information may be sold to others who commit these crimes or compile provides about individuals which others might find valuable.

With constant revelations about new data breaches impacting millions of Americans, we must take additional steps to protect the sensitive information of consumers maintained on corporate databases. This bill will provide a greater incentive for companies to provide notice of breaches consumers’ sensitive information such as Social Security numbers and financial account numbers. This protects the privacy of our citizens and allows them to be vigilant against identity theft.

IN RECOGNITION OF LYNN BLANCHETTE FOR HER 25 YEARS OF SERVICE ON THE RIVERVIEW CITY COUNCIL

HON. DEBBIE DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 3, 2017

Mrs. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Lynn Blanchette, Councilwoman and Mayor Pro Tem for the City of Riverview. For the past 25 years, Mrs. Blanchette has been an effective and dedicated member of the Riverview City Council.

Mrs. Blanchette has lived in Riverview for 47 years and has been active and engaged in civic life during her time in the city. She has been involved with the Riverview City Council since her election to the Council in 1991, and her public service been instrumental in helping the city of Riverview grow and develop. Recently, Mrs. Blanchette has helped Riverview navigate a challenging fiscal landscape while