

Last week, 53 Senators voted to block Sen. Jim Bunning (R-KY) from offsetting \$10 billion in new spending on unemployment benefits, health insurance subsidies (COBRA), highway funding, increased Medicare reimbursement rates for physicians (Doc Fix), a temporary “flood insurance” program and aid for small business programs.

Bunning declared in his lonely fight on the Senate floor:

I think the larger question raised by that move is what are the 53 Senators who voted to block my amendment afraid of? Are they afraid the Senate might pay for something we do? Are they afraid we might take a step toward balancing the budget? Are they afraid we will bring Washington's out of control spending just a little bit under control and live under the same rules as ordinary American families? Is it too much to ask, Mr. President, that we pay for what we spend? Last night 53 Senators said yes, Mr. President, it is too much to ask for. But I think it is not.

Bunning's efforts highlight the fact that liberals in Congress talk about offsetting new spending, yet continue to expand existing programs without cutting spending elsewhere to pay for it. During the debate on whether lawmakers should increase the debt limit ceiling to allow the federal government to owe more than \$14 trillion, Democrats offered an amendment to reinstitute pay-as-you-go budgeting (PAYGO). Brian Riedl of The Heritage Foundation points out, “when PAYGO was a law from 1991 through 2002, it was never enforced.” Offered an opportunity to abide by their new PAYGO rule, the liberals in Congress waived the rule in the text of the \$10 billion bill. So much for fiscal restraint.

Spending Limit Constitutional Amendment

Congressmen Mike Pence (R-Ind.), Jeb Hensarling (R-TX), and **John Campbell (R-CA)** have introduced a constitutional amendment that would limit federal spending. It states that “total annual outlays shall not exceed one-fifth of economic output of the United States of America.” This provision could be waived by a vote of two thirds of the House and Senate, and wouldn't be enforced during times of declared war. The language of the Amendment would allow five years for Congress to make appropriate cuts in spending programs before implementation.

Pence argues that this amendment is necessary because “public debt will consume the entire economy in less than fifteen years. Runaway spending and record debt will make future generations of Americans less free, less prosperous and less secure.” The irresponsible actions of Congress in not supporting Jim Bunning’s point that all new spending should be offset by cuts proves Pence’s point.

Blue Dog Balanced Budget Amendment

Not to be outdone, the Blue Dog Democrats unveiled a balanced budget amendment that would be implemented in 2020. Congressman Bobby Bright (D-Ala.) is the chief sponsor of the amendment supported by this caucus of Democrats who say they’re concerned with balancing the federal budget. A balanced budget requirement could only be overridden by a vote of three-fifths of the House and Senate.

One concern that many conservatives may have is that Social Security is exempted from the restrictions and is given constitutional protection. The Blue Dogs point out that forty-nine states require a balanced budget and the federal government should follow this common-sense standard. Yet there’s no bipartisan will to slow government spending, as these lawmakers showed when they chose not to stand with Kentucky’s Hall of Fame Senator last week to demand \$10 billion in savings.

Abortion and ObamaCare

Liberals are attempting one last time to get yet another massive expansion of government, ObamaCare, to the President’s desk. But abortion policy may block passage of that bill. It may be an issue that even the strong-arm tactics of the ObamaCare Nuclear Option (reconciliation) can’t overcome. Congressman Bart Stupak declared last week that “several Democrats who voted for (ObamaCare) in the House would oppose it next time around.” Resolving the abortion issue as part of the reconciliation process may be difficult, if not impossible.

Conservative Cheers to Sen. Bunning for throwing a brushback pitch at big-spending liberals and for spurring a Congressional debate on lawmakers’ addiction to overspending. Both

Democrats and Republicans have rolled out new ideas to address the budget deficit and spending issues. Too bad Democrats and most Republicans didn't stand with Bunning when they had a specific opportunity to save you, the taxpayer, \$10 billion.