

Your turn: Lawmakers need to make, stick to budget

By U.S. Rep. Michele Bachmann, 6th District

October 3, 2007

The fall is coming. Leaves will soon change color, our children are back in school, and Thanksgiving is just around the corner. Minnesotans have so much to look forward to in the final months of 2007, yet many do not realize that our federal fiscal year ends this week.

Congress is tasked with the important job of passing a budget and several spending bills to fund government programs for the new fiscal year, which began Oct. 1. Both the House and the Senate must pass these 12 bills before they are sent to the president for his signature. So far this Congress, majority leaders have passed a budget calling for the single largest tax increase in our nation's history — an increase that could amount to a whopping \$3,000 per year for the average American family.

Unfortunately, the House also passed more than \$950 billion in new government spending and additional tax increases totaling more than \$425 billion. All the while, it has ignored America's long-term deficit that, according to the U.S. Government Accountability Office, is unsustainable on our current fiscal track.

Thankfully, some lawmakers are fighting for pro-growth policies that will lead to more job opportunities, keep America competitive and put more dollars back into the hands of American taxpayers.

Because of the tax relief passed in 2001 and 2003, the average taxpayer will save about \$2,216 this year. And the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office forecasts that when the fiscal year wraps up, the annual budget deficit will be down for the third year in a row at 36 percent below last year's level. Our shrinking deficit reflects the strong and ongoing economic growth since Congress lowered taxes.

But this progress could be reversed if congressional leaders continue pushing for higher taxes and higher spending. At this time, none of the 12 appropriations bills have been signed by — or even sent to — the president. And despite a temporary fix to keep Uncle Sam in business until November, there will soon be cries that we must pass bloated spending bills to keep the government from shutting down.

While there are real differences in opinion about responsible spending levels, I hope we can all agree on the need to prevent a shutdown. That's why I support the Government Shutdown Prevention Act, legislation to keep federal programs funded while the details of the appropriations bills are finalized.

Not only would this bill ensure automatic stopgap funding, but it would protect Americans from the threat of a hasty Congress making bad spending decisions with taxpayer money in the interest of time.

Unfortunately, time is running out and majority leaders could sweep the remaining spending bills into one, giant package called an omnibus bill. These megabills are hundreds or thousands of pages long and often bundle "must pass" priorities with painful spending increases to improve the chances of enactment.

To steer Congress in the right direction, I joined 146 House members in sending a letter to the president pledging to uphold a veto of any spending bills that exceed his budget request.

And I will soon introduce legislation requiring the government to fully disclose long-term spending obligations — money Congress has already agreed to spend in future years, but does not list on the books. In addition to the budget deficit, this number will tell us how much Congress must reform fiscal policies to put us back on a sustainable track.

Most Minnesotans adhere to their monthly budgets and make tough, responsible spending choices every day. Like the family budget, Washington should stick to the same, basic principles to put the government's fiscal house in order — American taxpayers, our children and our grandchildren deserve no less.

This is the opinion of Michele Bachmann, Minnesota's 6th District representative in Congress.

This is a printer friendly version of an article from the **St. Cloud Times**
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

© 2007, St. Cloud Times, all rights reserved