

The politics of later

THE CONGRESSMEN

Congressman J. Randy Forbes



One of the most intolerable, if not irritating, words parents can hear from their children is "later."

"I'll clean my room *later*."

"I'll do my homework *later*."

"I'll call grandma *later*."

"I don't need to put gas in the car now. I'll just do it *later*."

It is irritating because parents know that *later* most often translates to *not* - rooms are left unclean, homework is unfinished, grandma is left waiting for the phone to ring. Later can also be dangerous - a car is driven on empty until it runs out of gas.

Such is how the American people feel when the President asked Congress last week to once again raise the debt ceiling for an additional borrowing authority of \$1.2 trillion. To a large group of the American public, raising the debt ceiling again is akin to saying "We'll just address this debt and spending problem *later*."

But the problem is that nothing really happens later. At some point later becomes now, and if we do not take action today, it will eventually translate to never.

To be fair, President Obama's request is not the reason for our skyrocketing debt; it is a symptom of our skyrocketing spending. As a part of last year's debt ceiling agreement, legislative language was included to allow the debt ceiling to be raised automatically 15 days after the President officially notified

Congress, unless Congress voted to deny the borrowing increase. I voted against this legislation last summer, in part because it put off what needed to be done then: cut spending.

The debt ceiling debate, and the President's request for additional borrowing power, has become the epitome of a culture of "later" that continues to permeate Washington.

The Senate has failed to pass a budget since April 2009. (We'll just pass a budget *later*).

Medicare spending is currently growing at a rate twice as fast as our nation's economy is growing. (We'll just address entitlements *later*).

Last week, the national debt hit the size of the U.S. economy (We'll just address the debt and spending *later*). Only, this new increase in the debt limit will be the sixth increase since President Obama took office, resulting in a total increase of \$5.1 trillion or a 45 percent increase in the debt limit. Furthermore, failure to address the nation's debt could prevent the creation of up to 1 million jobs, using the Administration's own economic models.

The politics of later is not working. Our debt and deficit problem in the U.S. has not gotten better - it has gotten worse. While some spending cuts have been made, there are gaping areas of our federal budget that must be addressed. Failing to take action to cut current spending, restrict future spending,

and improve federal budgeting will continue to worsen our nation's fiscal condition.

This week, I cosponsored and voted for legislation to disapprove of an increase in the statutory debt limit of \$1.2 trillion dollars (from \$15.194 to \$16.394 trillion) because I believe later is not enough.

However, I also believe we cannot just stop at disapproval. There are several ways I am working to address our nation's fiscal situation now. I have made it a priority to see that we cut and cap spending and balance our federal budget. Here's a look at some of my key priorities to return America to firm fiscal footing:

- **Fighting for firm spending limits.** I have long championed the Balanced Budget Amendment that would force Congress to live within its means.

- **Creating a consistent economic environment for businesses.** I have cosponsored the REINS Act to help rein in burdensome regulations. Even a small 5% reduction in the federal regulatory budget (about \$2.8 billion) would result in about \$75 billion in expanded private-sector GDP each year.

- **Passing a budget that makes tough choices** to cut wasteful spending and address entitlement programs, like the FY2012 budget proposed by Rep. Paul Ryan, which I support.

These are just three ways that we can begin to turn later into today. Read about my additional work to cut, cap and balance our federal budget and help revitalize our economy, on my website.

Real accountability lies in the now, not when problems are swept under the rug and left to be addressed at a later time. It is time Washington embraced the politics of now.