

ERNEST J. ISTOOK, JR.
5TH DISTRICT, OKLAHOMA

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEES:
VICE CHAIRMAN,
HOMELAND SECURITY
LABOR, HHS, AND EDUCATION
INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-3605

May 18, 2005

2404 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-3605
Fax: (202) 226-1463

DISTRICT OFFICES:
FIRST NATIONAL CENTER
120 NORTH ROBINSON, SUITE 100
OKLAHOMA CITY, OK 73102
Fax: (405) 234-9909

23 EAST 9TH, SUITE 301
SHAWNEE, OK 74801
(405) 273-6202
Fax: (405) 273-2574

211 EAST BROADWAY
SEMINOLE, OK 74868
(405) 303-2868
Fax: (405) 303-2847
istook@mail.house.gov

BE AN ORIGINAL COSPONSOR OF THE BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT

Dear Colleague:

In 1995, 300 members of the House cast a historic bipartisan vote for the Balanced Budget Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Although the BBA then failed in the Senate by a single vote, Congress nevertheless proceeded to achieve an actual balanced budget. Now, we are reminded that our four years of balanced budgets were temporary. Our children and grandchildren remain at risk if we do not return to a balanced budget after the current wartime emergency.

The BBA anticipated that such an emergency could arise. Its text permits Congress to waive its provisions both in years of declared war, and when “the United States is engaged in military conflict which causes an imminent and serious military threat to national security and is so declared by a joint resolution, adopted by a majority of the whole number of each House.”

The American people support budgeting “whatever it takes” to protect our homeland. They are rightly skeptical, however, about how and when we will return to a balanced budget, and avert the nightmare scenarios if we revert to constant deficit spending. The best reassurance we can give them—and the best security—is to demonstrate how total our commitment is, by passing the Balanced Budget Amendment.

I am re-introducing the exact language that we voted upon in 1995 (except for the necessary date change--see text on reverse side). We all may have ideas for revisions, but let us start with the language that already attracted 300 votes. It would take effect beginning with the second fiscal year after ratification by the states. Both because ratification will take time, and because Congress can invoke the wartime exception, the BBA will not diminish our commitment to the war against terrorism. Rather, it will demonstrate our commitment to a sound and brighter future for our children and grandchildren.

No ordinary law can restrain Congress, because Congress has the power to *remove* that safeguard whenever it wishes. Only an *extraordinary law* can assure self-restraint by Congress, namely a Constitutional Amendment.

I urge you to call Kurt Conrad on my staff at 225-2132 to be an original cosponsor of the Balanced Budget Amendment.

Sincerely,



Ernest J. Istook Jr.
Member of Congress

109th CONGRESS
1st Session

H. J. RES. _____

Proposing a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. Istook introduced the following joint resolution; which was referred to
the Committee on _____

JOINT RESOLUTION

Proposing a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled (two-thirds of each House concurring therein), That the following article is proposed as an amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which shall be valid to all intents and purposes as part of the Constitution when ratified by the legislatures of three-fourths of the several States within seven years after the date of its submission for ratification:

Article--

SECTION 1. Total outlays for any fiscal year shall not exceed total receipts for that fiscal year, unless three-fifths of the whole number of each House of Congress shall provide by law for a specific excess of outlays over receipts by a rollcall vote.

SECTION 2. The limit on the debt of the United States held by the public shall not be increased, unless three-fifths of the whole number of each House shall provide by law for such an increase by a rollcall vote.

SECTION 3. Prior to each fiscal year, the President shall transmit to the Congress a proposed budget for the United States Government for that fiscal year in which total outlays do not exceed total receipts.

SECTION 4. No bill to increase revenue shall become law unless approved by a majority of the whole number of each House by a rollcall vote.

SECTION 5. The Congress may waive the provisions of this article for any fiscal year in which a declaration of war is in effect. The provisions of this article may be waived for any fiscal year in which the United States is engaged in military conflict which causes an imminent and serious military threat to national security and is so declared by a joint resolution, adopted by a majority of the whole number of each House, which becomes law.

SECTION 6. The Congress shall enforce and implement this article by appropriate legislation, which may rely on estimates of outlays and receipts.

SECTION 7. Total receipts shall include all receipts of the United States Government except those derived from borrowing. Total outlays shall include all outlays of the United States Government except for those for repayment of debt principal.

SECTION 8. This article shall take effect beginning with the later of the second fiscal year beginning after its ratification or the first fiscal year beginning after December 31, 2010.