

3. Put a lid on spending.—From 2001 to 2003, total government spending soared by 16 percent. Blue Dogs want strict spending caps to slow the growth of runaway government programs. Blue Dogs propose holding the line on discretionary spending for the next three fiscal years at 2.1 percent—the percentage increase proposed this year in the President's fiscal 2006 budget.

4. Require agencies to put their fiscal houses in order.—According to the Government Accounting Office, 16 of 23 major federal agencies can't issue a simple audit of their books. Worse, the Federal Government can't account for \$24.5 billion spent in 2003. Government auditors should be doing a better job of tracking taxpayer dollars. Blue Dogs propose a budget freeze for any federal agency that can't properly balance its books.

5. Make Congress tell taxpayers how much they're spending.—Many spending bills slide through Congress on a voice vote with no debate and many members vote on bills without knowing their cost. Blue Dogs propose that any bills calling for more than \$50 million in new spending must be put to a roll-call vote.

6. Set aside a rainy-day fund.—Under current law, almost any spending can be designated an "emergency," and so-called "emergency spending" has turned into a giant loophole for non-emergency spending. Blue Dogs propose closing this loophole by defining emergency and requiring Congress to have a separate vote on items that are designated "emergency" spending. Blue Dogs also propose creating a rainy-day fund—something that 45 states currently do.

7. Don't hide votes to raise the debt limit.—Current House rules allow for automatic increases in the debt limit if Congress passes a budget resolution that increases the public debt. Since its establishment in 1980, this rule has been used to shield as many as 12 separate increases in the debt limit from a vote. Blue Dogs believe that increases in the public debt limit shouldn't be hidden from public view. Blue Dogs propose to change the current rules so that every increase in the public debt limit must be subject to a rollcall vote.

8. Justify spending for pet projects.—Every year, Congress spends billions on wasteful pork-barrel projects, such as \$50 million for an indoor rainforest in Iowa and funding for the Paper Industry International Hall of Fame.

Since 1991, Congress has spent \$185 billion on pet projects for members of Congress, and in fiscal 2004 alone, pork-barrel spending totaled \$22.9 billion.

While many of these projects may be worthy of taxpayer support, many are not. Blue Dogs propose that members of Congress must provide written justification, available to the public, of any earmarked spending for pet projects.

9. Ensure that Congress reads the bills it's voting on.—Over the past few years, some of the largest spending bills in American history have been voted on after only a few hours of consideration. For example, the Medicare prescription drug bill, now estimated to cost \$720 billion over the next ten years, went to a vote barely a day after the final version of the 500 + page bill was made available to members of Congress. Blue Dogs propose that members of Congress should be given a minimum of three-days to have the final text of legislation made available to them before there is a vote.

10. Require honest cost estimates for every bill that Congress votes on.—Both taxpayers and members of Congress should be aware of

the price tag for any legislation passed by Congress, and there are no current requirements that bills be accompanied by an honest and objective estimate of their fiscal impact. Blue Dogs propose that every conference report and bill that comes to the floor of the House be accompanied by a cost estimate prepared by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO).

11. Make sure new bills fit the budget.—The Budget Committee can play an important role in making sure that new legislation passed by Congress lives within the rules agreed upon by Congress in the annual budget resolution.

Blue Dogs propose that the Budget Committee strengthen its oversight role by preparing budget compliance statements for every bill that is reported out of committee for consideration by the full Congress.

12. Make Congress do a better job of keeping tabs on government programs.—Blue Dogs believe that one way to restrain growth in federal spending is to ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent wisely. Blue Dogs also believe that Congress can do a better job of carrying out its oversight responsibilities. Blue Dogs propose that each committee be required to submit reports at least twice a year, available to the public, that provide an update on how each committee is fulfilling its oversight duties.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

EVEN START

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. CUNNINGHAM) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CUNNINGHAM. Mr. Speaker, I am a strong supporter of our President and I feel that he has done a good job in this Nation. Actually the world owes him and the First Lady a lot of support and our gratitude.

Sometimes the bean counters in the White House though take a look at a program and do not look at its effectiveness and they eliminate it. Many times they have to look at a program and eliminate it if it is duplicative or wasteful or ineffective.

But during the last budget process there was a program on the list that was not only effective but enhanced Leave No Child Behind and education, and the title of that was Even Start.

Ask any teacher, administrator or parent that if a parent is involved in the program called Even Start and my friend, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) and I have a friend named Peter Yarrow involved in that. I know I can count on my colleague to support this because we did last year.

This program brings parents and it brings students together to work together. Any time you can involve parents in education the outcome is much, much better.

Chairman Bill Goodling, the former Member who was then the chairman of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, ramrodded Even Start. He kept it alive when it was almost fatal.

This House last Congress recognized the significance of the successful program and came together, both Republicans and Democrats, and reinstated the Even Start program. The gains in low income children, their parents are well-documented in improving literacy levels and assisting parents in completing their GEDs. Quite often low income parents in our districts and the gentleman from California's (Mr. FILLNER) and the gentleman from Wisconsin's (Mr. OBEY) do not even speak English, and these parents actually come together with their children and work these programs, and we want to have it reinstated. I have faith that we are.

The fact that the chairman of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER) is supportive, and the gentleman from California (Mr. MCKEON), chairman of the subcommittee, are supportive, and we have commitment I believe in the Senate to do the same thing.

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My wife asked me to go listen to a man one year who is a good friend of the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) as well. She said, I want you to go here Peter Yarrow. I said, who is Peter Yarrow? She said, Peter, Paul and Mary, Peter Yarrow. I said, that anti-war, left-wing guy, I am not going to go listen to him, and she said, Well, honey, I support you and your events, go to this thing with me. I did, and I think the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) will admit and agree that he is one of the most caring people that we have ever met, especially when it comes to children and children's programs.

Peter Yarrow has a song called "Don't Laugh At Me," and he is involved also in the Even Start program, and I would submit the rest of this for the RECORD, but Peter's issue is that things like Columbine, if we would have encouraged these children to get together and not laugh at each other, then maybe we would not have had a Columbine.

I would like to read just a few stanzas of the song that he sings. He was so effective, I invited this guy that I do not agree with in many politics, but we brought him before the Republican Conference, and he wowed the people and got support for the Even Start program.

I'm a little boy with glasses, the one they call a geek. A little girl who never smiles, 'cause I have braces on my teeth. And I know how it feels to cry myself to sleep.

I'm that kid on every playground who's always chosen last. A single teenage mother, tryin' to overcome my past. You don't have to be my friend, but is it too much to ask.