



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

HAROLD A. SCHAITBERGER
General President

THOMAS H. MILLER
General Secretary-Treasurer

July 28, 2011

Member of Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the nation's nearly 300,000 professional fire fighters and emergency medical personnel, I urge you to oppose any balanced budget amendment to the United States Constitution.

Although there is a clear need to lower the long-term federal budget deficit, requiring a balanced budget through a constitutional amendment would be disastrous for the U.S. economy. During periods of economic downturns, the federal government's safety-net programs like unemployment insurance, Medicaid, and food stamps face greater demand right when federal receipts are in rapid decline. Requiring a balanced budget every year would force cuts to these and other important programs or force tax increases. Either prescription would risk tipping a faltering economy into recession or making recessions worse.

Furthermore, any constitutional balanced budget amendment would limit the ability of the federal government to make important investments in worthy causes, including crucial public safety and homeland security programs. Even at a time of fiscal austerity, we must continue to provide for the country's public safety and homeland security needs. Any constitutional balanced budget amendment would grossly undermine the ability to protect the lives and well-being of Americans nationwide.

The nation's fire fighters understand and support the need to reduce federal spending, but passage of a constitutional balanced budget amendment would further damage the already weakened economy and prevent the federal government from making critical investments.

Again, I urge you to vote against any balanced budget amendment to the United States Constitution. Thank you for considering the views of our nation's first responders.

Sincerely,

Harold A. Schaitberger
General President