

**WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (MD-5) spoke on the House Floor today in opposition to the balanced budget amendment. Below are his remarks and a link to the video.**

Click [here](#) to watch the video.

“In 1995 I spoke on the Floor in support of a balanced budget amendment. That was sixteen years ago. There’s a lot of water over the bridge since that time. I said then, and I quote: ‘I do so because I believe that this country confronts a critical threat caused by the continuation of large annual deficits.’

“I believed that then, and I believe it now, and I have voted against tax cuts that weren’t paid for. I voted against Social Security benefits that weren’t paid for, and I voted against other items that weren’t paid for. I stand by my 1995 statement today.

“However, as I have said, events in the last sixteen years lead me to oppose today’s balanced budget amendment. Only months after we had that debate, my Republican colleagues shut down the government. In 1997 we passed an amendment with bipartisan agreement reaffirming the 1990 agreement that we would have a PAYGO process in place, and, without having passed a balanced budget amendment, we did in fact balance the budget four years in a row. Why? Because we paid for what we bought, we didn’t cut revenues before we cut spending, and we restrained spending four years in a row.

“I tell my Republican friends, none of you in your lifetime has lived during the course of a President who had four balanced budgets. Were you partially responsible? Absolutely. Were we partially responsible? We didn’t need an amendment. We needed the will and the courage. Without having passed that balanced budget amendment under President Clinton, not only were we able to balance the budget but we also achieved the only presidential term in the lifetime of anybody in this chamber or listening to me who had four years of balance and a net surplus. Hear me: a net surplus at the end of 96 months as President of the United States. We

made it happen not with a balanced budget amendment but because we had the will to do so and by following pay-go rules.

“Sadly, I tell my colleagues and the American people, Mr. Speaker, under President Bush, Republicans exploded the deficit and abandoned PAYGO along with the principle that we ought to pay for what we buy. We do not have a spending problem or a revenue problem. We have a pay-for problem.

“The Republican Congress spent enormous sums on two wars, a prescription drug program, and tax cuts without paying for them. If you have the courage of your convictions, you pay for things. Spending rose at a level nearly twice the inflation rate that Bill Clinton’s rose in spending during the eight years of the Bush administration – when Republicans were in charge of everything for six years and had a President who could veto anything that we did for two.

“When the financial crisis hit in 2008, President Bush told us that if we failed to act there would be a high risk of depression. What did the President’s party do? You say you have a 3/5 vote if there’s an emergency? President Bush told us that if we did not act there would be a depression. And in fact we had a vote, and that vote was 205-228 with 2/3 of the President’s party voting against the President in what he called a crisis. That gives me, I tell my friends on the Republican side, no confidence that in time of danger and crisis that we could summon 3/5 vote.

“I believed in 1995 we could summon those votes because, frankly, we were a much more bipartisan and, in my opinion, responsible body, but I do not have that confidence today, and I am not prepared to take that risk. My party, of course, voted with President Bush because we thought there was a crisis. Now, a few days after that, we came back to vote, and we did pass it, but I tell my friends that even on the second vote, when we did in fact pass that bill that President Bush asked us to pass because there was a crisis, he could not summon the majority of your party to support him. Barely 3/5, notwithstanding the President’s assertion of crisis, voted to meet that crisis with 172 Democrats voting with President Bush in a bipartisan response to crisis.

“Earlier this year, again in control of the House, Republicans brought the government to the brink of shutdown, and over the summer we saw them hold the country hostage by pushing to the brink of default - the first time in my memory, the United States of America at the brink of default. I have not changed my beliefs about balancing the budget, and I invite all of you to vote

with me on paying for things that we buy, not passing those onto my children, my grandchildren and my two great-grandchildren. We have shown we can do it. We balanced the budget for four years.

“Don’t talk about it. Just do it. Don’t refuse to pay for it. Don’t cut taxes and increase spending. Don’t just preach fiscal responsibility. Practice it. It will take no courage to vote for this amendment, but it will take courage to balance our budget by paying for what we buy.”

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