

October 2, 2003

Dear Republican Colleague:

A wise man once said that balancing the budget is like going to heaven. Everyone wants to do it, but nobody wants to do what you have to do to get there. That adage goes a long way to describe the current climate in Congress regarding the ballooning budget deficit.

Many of us are growing increasingly concerned with both the current deficit and the rhetoric being used by some to marginalize it. The Office of Management and Budget recently reported that the current fiscal year's deficit is expected to reach \$614 billion (the largest nominal deficit ever), excluding Social Security receipts. Next year's deficit is projected to be even larger. Depressingly, these figures do not tell the full story as there are many new costly programs in the pipeline that have yet to be enacted, such as adding a prescription drug benefit to Medicare for seniors and the continuing cost of conducting the war against terror. In other words, the fiscal clouds are not looming on the distant horizon any longer – they are hovering over our backyard.

There is no doubt that these are “spending driven” deficits. Since 1998, federal spending has increased by 22 percent and the amount government spends annually per household has risen from \$16,000 to \$21,000 – a five-year spending binge the likes of which we have not seen since WWII. But the binge did not start yesterday. The federal budget has been growing seven times faster than the family budget over the last two generations. In other words, the greatest assault on the family budget is the unrestrained growth of the federal budget. To protect the family budget and conduct the war against terror, we must prioritize federal programs. Although there is no substitute for our collective courage and commitment to principle, sensible reform of our pro-spending budgeting process will be a powerful tool to reduce the deficit and protect the family budget.

The Family Budget Protection Act would set America on a responsible fiscal path once again by balancing the budget in five years. It would tackle our spending-driven deficits through a series of discretionary and mandatory spending safeguards, as well as provide a new biennial budget process that would produce a budget resolution to be enacted into law. The Family Budget Protection Act would place a premium on reducing spending without cutting needed services by combating waste, fraud and abuse that is rampant in our government. More than anything, the bill represents our commitment to the American family that their budget is no less important than the federal budget.

Please co-sponsor this important legislation and help me protect the family budget. As President Reagan once said, “If not us, who? If not now, when?” For more information, please call Russ Vought at 6-8581.

Yours respectfully,

JEB HENSARLING  
Member of Congress