

When I was first elected to Congress in 2005, lots of people wanted to meet with me.

I naturally assumed they wanted to give me their opinions on pressing public policy issues facing the country. I was wrong.

Nearly 90 percent of my first 100 or so meetings were with people wanting me to give your taxpayer dollars to their institution, business or cause. I wondered whether I had become a congressman or some sort of ATM that doled out other people's money.

Wouldn't you know, hardly any meetings were with people asking me to spend less money on something.

I tell this story because it shows how deeply the culture of spending is entrenched in Washington. Each member of Congress is bombarded with requests to spend more taxpayer money on this or that.

The causes are always presented as very worthy. We can help these people, or cure this disease, or better defend the country and on and on. So it goes. We've all heard this story before.

But now, because of all of this spending, an even greater cause has been created: preventing the bankruptcy of the United States.

We can't, as a society, do much for those other causes if we are either insolvent or taxed so highly that there are neither jobs nor growth.

This is where Project YouCut comes in. We must change the culture of spending in Washington. We need the cries of those who want less government spending at least to equal

the noise of those who want government to spend more.

YouCut is a great way for average Americans who want to see the country strong again to communicate to Congress that they would like less spending and, more specifically, to say where they think spending ought to be reduced.

Just as the spending lobby uses a specific program and its benefits to sell more spending, the public, through YouCut, can use a specific item of waste to argue for less spending.

We need your help. There are far more Americans who want the government to tax and spend less than those who have their hand out for someone else's — taxpayer — money. It's just that the people with their hands out are more active in Washington.

The more people participate in YouCut, the more we can level the playing field and send a message that finding places to save money is more mission critical than finding places to spend it. And there are many, many places to save it.

We can change the culture here in Washington — but only with the help of Americans outside Washington.

Participate in Project YouCut and be part of the solution.