

[Ross Sneyd, VPR News](#)

Growing deficits have become a powerful political issue in Washington. Republicans accuse the Democrats of expanding the size and power of the federal government.

Democrats say they've simply used government to try to revive the economy. But some Democrats acknowledge that deficits have to be tackled.

And as VPR's Ross Sneyd reports, Congressman Peter Welch is one of them.

Congressman Welch says he's a supporter of the Democratic leadership.

So it was unusual to see him line up with three colleagues who are members of the "New Democrat Coalition."

That's a caucus that has broken with the leadership on a variety of issues, most recently a bill imposing new regulations on the financial industry.

Welch says it's time to face up to the deficit crisis, regardless of ideology.

(Welch) "What brought us together is the common recognition that the deficit really is a problem."

(Sneyd) That's a widely accepted proposition in Congress, Welch says, but no one is willing to deal with it.

So he and Congressmen from Connecticut, Michigan and New Jersey offered a list of cuts in

energy, housing and agriculture that could total \$70 billion in savings over 10 years.

For his part, Welch offered ideas for saving \$4 billion over a decade from a Pentagon budget that exceeds \$700 billion a year.

He acknowledges there's a long way to go.

(Welch) "It would be a beginning, really a downpayment. And our goal is really to light a fire among our colleagues to say, 'Hey, let's stop arguing about this and let's start doing the common sense practical things that we can do.'"

(Sneyd) Republicans say the plan is less common sense than political survival.

The National Republican Congressional Committee put out a statement detailing record deficit spending that Welch has supported.

The committee accused Welch and the other congressmen embracing deficit reduction only because the fall elections are approaching.

For VPR News, I'm Ross Sneyd.