



CONGRESSMAN

John J. Duncan, Jr.

Washington Report



Second District – Tennessee

July 2011

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

✓ **Debt Limit**

The biggest issue the Congress and the Country will face over the next several weeks will be whether to raise our national debt limit and, if so, by how much. The statutory limit now is a mind-boggling \$14.3 trillion. House Speaker John Boehner has demanded spending cuts equal to the debt increase. This is not enough but may be the best that can be accomplished in a divided government. This debt increase should not be supported if the cuts are put off to future years when they can be ignored by those in office at that time. While it is little consolation, if the Congress had voted as I have during my years in office, we would have very little debt, if any, and our future would be much more secure. While any major, meaningful cuts will cause problems, we need to bite the bullet now or things will be much worse in the years just ahead. Charles Krauthammer, possibly the smartest commentator on national issues today, wrote in a column in early June that what scared the Secretary of the Treasury “is not that we won’t be able to pay our creditors but that his treasury won’t be able to continue spending the obscene amounts of money (about \$120 billion a month) it doesn’t have and will (temporarily) be unable to borrow.” Krauthammer added that for now money can be moved around to pay our creditors, but we will be unable to do that in a few years when the “real” debt crisis, a freak-like default hits: “... debt service, now \$214 billion

a year, climbs to \$931 billion in a decade.”

✓ **Federal Deficits**

Some people say we have to raise taxes to close our unbelievable \$1.6 trillion yearly deficits. However, the problem is not that we tax too little but that we spend too much. No one believes we can wipe out deficits this high overnight, but if we did, we would still have by far the biggest, most expensive federal government in the world. There are a tiny, miniscule number of people – probably less than one-tenth of one percent – who make ridiculously unfair salaries. But even if we taxed all their income over, say, one million dollars at 100%, it would not even come close to wiping out our deficits and debt. But, higher taxes really hurt the overall economy, because there just are not the same pressures to save money or work hard in the federal government as there are in the private sector. A private business that continually wastes money will soon go out of business. A government agency that wastes or loses money just uses that as an excuse to get higher funding the next year. Thus every dollar that can be kept in the private sector will be spent more efficiently and will do more to create jobs and hold down prices than will money turned over to government. Unfortunately there is one growing exception to this, and that is that some of our largest federal contractors are now about as wasteful as the government.

✓ **The Economy**

On June 4, the Washington Post had headlines saying “Job Creation withers in May as doubt reigns”, “Recovery is losing strength”, and “New Hiring Plummet”. The story was about unemployment going back up to 9.1% amid what the Post called “lingering uncertainty.” Another Post story quoted Rabbi Merrill Shapiro of Flagler County, Florida saying: “People here turn on the TV and hear the economy is turning around and they wonder where in the world these people are they are talking about.” This Nation could and should be booming. Three things which would greatly help would be: (1) stop spending hundreds of billions we cannot afford in other countries; (2) be kind and polite but firm in telling the Chinese we can no longer sustain such large trade deficits, and they are going to have to find products they can buy from us; and (3) tell environmental radicals all they are doing is helping foreign energy companies and that we are going to have to have more U.S. energy production of all types to create jobs and bring down gas and utility bills and other prices.

✓ **Inflation Dangers**

In the biography, Bonhoeffer, about the famous Theologian, by Eric Metaxas, it says that in 1921, the currency exchange rate was 75 German marks to the dollar. The next year, it was 400 marks to a dollar. Then inflation really took off and by early 1923, it was 7,000 to one. Metaxas wrote: “The re-

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sultant economic turmoil would make the bleak conditions of a few months earlier look like the good old days.” By August, a dollar was worth one million marks. The book says: “By the end of 1923, things had become impossible. In October, Dietrich wrote that every meal cost one billion marks.” Germany in the early 1920’s was one of the most educated countries in the world. It is hard to imagine what could happen here if we continue to spend money we do not have and run trillions more into debt.

✓ **Budget Bills**

Almost every year, if Congress even passes a budget, it receives far more publicity than it deserves. This may be because it is done fairly early in the year, before the appropriations bills, which are far more important, have been voted on and before most other major bills are completed. It would be a good thing if we had always passed budgets without huge deficit spending and stuck to them. However, just like a family agreeing to a budget at the first of each year, there would be unexpected things that would happen and changes before the end of the year. This year, the House passed a budget that received great publicity because it advocated changes to Medicare for those under 55. Philip Klein, an editorial staff writer for the Washington Examiner, wrote: “It’s much easier to attack a plan when the comparison is an imaginary world in which Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security can remain intact with little action from Washington than it is to present a counterproposal that itself could become a target.” New York Times columnist David Brooks, writing about the House Budget, wrote: “The current welfare state is simply unsustainable and anybody who is serious, on left or right, has to have a new vision of the social contract.”

✓ **Future Cuts**

The House budget bill received great publicity because it laid out a

plan for \$6.2 trillion in cuts in federal spending over the next 10 years. While this was attacked for cutting too much, it actually allowed for increases in spending each year, and just slowed the rate of growth. It also allowed deficit spending each year but made significant reductions in the level of yearly deficits. The National Debt would go way up even under the so-called Ryan Budget, but it just made much bigger proposed cuts than in the President’s budget. However, even to talk about a 10-year budget can be awfully misleading, because the smartest people in the world cannot tell us where the economy will be even two or three years from now. And, above all, the House budget did not pass the Senate, and the Congress did not pass a budget last year when it was under different leadership.

✓ **Medical Aid**

President Obama said in a news conference in June of 2009: “the U.S. Government is not going to be able to afford Medicare and Medicaid on its current trajectory.... The notion that somehow we can just keep on doing what we are doing and that’s OK, that’s just not true.” Approximately 50 million people are now enrolled in Medicare, but thousands more are being added each day because of Baby Boom retirements. Costs for 2011 were slightly over \$12,000 per person. According to the Medicare Trustees, the program is now going many billions in the hole every year and will have a total indebtedness of \$24.4 trillion in 75 years. We have got to stop letting companies and providers get rich off of government medical care.

✓ **Healthcare**

The biggest problem with the healthcare bill passed by the last Congress is that we cannot even come close to being able to afford it. But another huge objection is that it dictates that unelected bureaucrats, sitting on something

called the Independent Payment Advisory Board, will have the power to limit or restrict medical care. Dr. Mark Necrophades wrote in the Washington Times: “Who will decide? Will it be the individual who decides what is best for him and what is in his best interest? Or will it be a board of anointed social planners who decide what we may and may not have in order to determine what is best for the collective? Who will we be as a people? Will we continue to be a nation that supremely values individual liberty as our Founding Fathers envisioned... Or will we sacrifice our right to make our decisions to a panel of bureaucrats in Washington?” The healthcare bill is so onerous that over 1,000 companies and local governments have now requested waivers from this law.

✓ **Iraq Security**

A State Department representative testified at a Congressional hearing a few days ago that the Department will spend three billion dollars a year on security for federal employees in Iraq after U.S. troops leave at the end of 2012. First, I doubt that we will really pull all our troops out at that time, and there is already talk about leaving several thousand there. Second, three billion just for security? This would be on top of the billions we would be spending each year to keep thousands of State Department and other government employees in Iraq for many years to come. These security costs include purchases for all sorts of armored vehicles, weapons, high-tech gear, etc. And remember that almost all federal estimates on spending over the last 40 or 50 years have been way low. To hire the planned 5100 security personnel to guard thousands of other civilian federal employees for a prolonged presence in Iraq is needless, excessive, and will waste many billions. The non-partisan National Journal in late May had this fascinating headline: “If U.S. troops leave Iraq on schedule, vio-

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lence could worsen. If they stay, violence could worsen.”

✓ **War Powers**

For many years, Presidents have in large part ignored the Congress when deciding about the use of military force. In fact, syndicated columnist Stephen Chapman wrote a few days ago about Libya that in matters of war “the President has all the powers of an emperor and Congress has all the powers of a potted plant.” He added critically that “when it comes to using military force, neither the law nor the Constitution means a thing.” I recently was on Judge Napolitano’s show on Fox to discuss this issue. I am co-sponsoring a bill to strengthen the War Powers Act. This bill would permit a President to use force only with (1) a declaration of war; (2) specific statutory authorization or obligation under a treaty; or (3) a national emergency caused by an attack or imminent threat.

✓ **Main Goals**

This is my 23rd year in the Congress, and I am very grateful to the people of the Second District for giving me the privilege to serve. My main goals have changed very little over the years. First, I want to help as many people as possible with problems of all types, because our government at all levels has become so big and impersonal that often citizens are ignored or do not get the treatment they deserve. Second, I have tried to speak out in every way possible for fiscal sanity, because I have always believed that our debt and deficits were going to cause very serious problems and possibly even at some point an economic crash. I am speaking out now more than ever on this, because, while the problem has grown much greater, it gives some hope that millions more people are deeply concerned about this. Third, I have voted and done everything I could to promote a more humble, non-interventionist foreign policy. I believe we should not be eager to

go to war so our leaders can prove they are Churchill-like world statesmen and that we should start putting our own Country and people first instead of trying to run other countries.

✓ **Committee Work**

I have also emphasized the work on three committees: Transportation and Infrastructure, Natural Resources and Oversight and Government Reform. A Member simply cannot be involved heavily in every issue and still be effective. The people of East Tennessee send a whopping amount of money to the federal government each year. No district can even come close to getting more than a small part back, but I have tried very hard to get our fair share in grants and appropriations for projects that were not wasteful. I have chaired the Aviation and Water Resources and Environment Subcommittees for six years each (the Republican limit) and presently chair the Highways and Transit Subcommittee. I am especially pleased that we have been able to help get a lot of work done in East Tennessee in these areas.

✓ **EPA-TVA**

TVA recently caved in to power-mad bureaucrats at the EPA and agreed to shut 18 coal-fired plants at a cost to ratepayers of three to five billion dollars. In addition, TVA agreed to a fine of \$10 million and to spend \$350 million on environmental projects. I criticized this agreement because it will drive up utility bills at a time many people already have a hard enough time paying these costs. TVA said it would not drive up the bills, but then a few weeks later said that a separate \$200 million cost would cause a rate increase. This does not make sense. Government officials are too quick to agree to bad deals when the money is not coming from them personally. I wish the new members of the TVA Board would try harder to think of low-income and unemployed ratepayers.

This agreement was announced just a couple of days after representatives of the Tennessee Valley’s largest employers told me TVA’s business rates are causing serious problems for them. And I have heard more complaints about EPA over the last couple of years than I have heard about any federal agency in my 23 years in Congress combined.

✓ **Light Bulbs**

Unless Congress changes the law, traditional 100-watt light bulbs will not be produced starting next year. Incandescent light bulbs are to be phased out over two years, starting with 100-watt bulbs, followed by 75-watt bulbs in January 2013, and 60- and 40-watt bulbs in January 2014. Supposedly, this is being done to save electricity, but it is being done at the same time the President wants a million electric cars on the roads by 2015. The electric cars will use far more electricity than will be saved by the light bulb ban. The light bulb law came after intensive lobbying primarily by General Electric. Traditional incandescent bulbs are made mostly in America, while the newer compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs) are made mostly in China. The Energy Department says because CFLs contain mercury, if one is broken, people are supposed to leave the room for 15 minutes, turn off forced-air heating or cooling, scoop up fragments with stiff paper and sticky tape or wet wipes, not brooms or vacuum cleaners, and then place them in canning jars or sealed plastic bags. Also, the CFLs are much more expensive. People should not have to do all this and should be free to buy the kind of light bulbs they want. I did not vote for the bill that required this change, and I am co-sponsoring a bill to do away with this big government, nanny-state mandate.

✓ **Government “Help”**

As some Members have made the government bigger and bigger, the main beneficiaries have been ex-

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tremely big business and others who have gamed the system. The head of Hospital Corporation of America reportedly received a bonus of \$38,000,000. People and companies did not make obscene bonuses and become mega-millionaires off of healthcare until the government got into it. Before that medical care was cheap and affordable by almost everyone and doctors even made house calls. People could work part time and pay all their college expenses, and no one had to borrow money to go to college before the federal student loan program. Before the government got into it, tuition and fees went up at the rate of inflation. In the many years since the government started “helping”, costs for higher education have gone up three or four or five times the rate of inflation almost every year. In a new book by Deirdre McCloskey, she writes that socialism “stifled growth, enriched large industrialists, and kept the people poor” and that there is no question that capitalism “works better for the average person.” Our problems have grown bigger and unfairness in society has increased the more we have moved toward a big government- big business duopoly and the further we have strayed from a true free market system where small businesses have a chance.

✓ **Good News**

Some groups do not want people to hear good news, especially about the environment, because their contributions would go down. But chemist Rich Trzupek recently wrote: “But then cap and trade was never really about reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It was about raising revenue. The United States has long had multiple emission reduction programs in place, and these will continue to grow... All these efforts, and many others, have been spectacularly successful. Recently released EPA data shows that America is back down to mid-1990s levels of emissions. On a per capita basis greenhouse gas emis-

sions in the United States declined by 16% over the last decade. That reduction is almost 50 percent better than what the 15 richest nations in Europe (the EU-15) achieved in the same time frame, even though Europe has had a cap and trade program in place.” Hopefully, more people will realize that only a free market, free enterprise system will produce enough money to do good things for the environment. Socialist countries have been the worst polluters in the world because their economies will barely produce enough income to feed, clothe and house their people, with very little, if any, left over for environmental or conservation programs.

✓ **More Good News**

In March, it was reported that in the 32 states covered by the EPA’s proposed Clean Air Transport Rule, the daily air quality standard for fine particulate matter (i.e. soot) was violated less than one-tenth of a percent of the time (.096%) in 2009, the most recent year with completed studies. According to the most recent data for ground-level ozone (i.e. smog), the 8-hour ozone standard was violated only 1.3% of the time. These percentages have gone down even though the EPA has raised the bar and toughened the standards several times over the years. There will be even more improvements in air quality in the years ahead as technology improves unless government overregulation slows our economy, stifles innovation, and runs more small and medium-size companies out of business. It would be better to have businesses spend money on newer, better, and thus cleaner equipment than it would to spend it on government paperwork and red tape.

✓ **Welfare Reform**

According to the Heritage Foundation, federal welfare programs now cost taxpayers more than \$900 billion a year, and half of food stamp aid goes to those who have received this aid for 8.5 years or more. Fed-

eral and state welfare spending has almost doubled just since 1996, and this increase has more than doubled the rate of inflation in that period. There is more fraud in Social Security disability and in food stamps than any other programs, yet there is little incentive to catch it. Government agencies get more money, more employees, bigger and nicer buildings and offices the more people they have on their rolls. In the movie “Cinderella Man”, the true story of boxer James J. Braddock, he is shown paying back the welfare money his family received during the Depression. The scene shows him telling a reporter: “I believe we live in a great country... great enough to help a man financially when he’s in trouble. I’m back in the black and I just thought I should return it.”

✓ **Government Dependency**

Many people have estimated that we could give the poor enough cash money to lift them above the poverty line for far less than it takes to operate all our different federal, state, and local welfare programs. The brilliant columnist Thomas Sowell, wrote recently: “We don’t need to send the Country into bankruptcy by spending trillions of dollars on people who are not poor and who could take care of themselves. The poor have been used as human shields, behind which the expanding welfare state can advance. The goal is not to keep the poor from starving but to create dependency, because dependency translates into votes for politicians who play Santa Claus.”

✓ **IRS Fraud**

Several years ago I read that half the advice the IRS gave out was wrong, if by some miracle you could ever get a hold of them in the first place. Now, the Treasury Department’s Inspector General has found at least 128 IRS employees who claimed a first-time homebuyer credit to which they were not entitled. These IRS employees also made other claims that showed

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they either were not first-time homebuyers or bought their homes outside the eligibility period for the credit which was worth up to \$8,000. The report said one other IRS employee helped friends or relatives claim the credit falsely too. There is no good reason why we should have a tax code nearly as complicated, confusing, and convoluted as the one we have. Almost everyone has unintentionally violated some tax law.

✓ **Cell Phones**

The current issue of the Saturday Evening Post Magazine has a cartoon showing one man on the street telling another man, sarcastically, "That was a very interesting cell phone conversation. Thanks for sharing it with me." Many people do not realize how loud they talk when they are using their cell phones. The Washington Post had a story about the claim that cell phones cause cancer and said the only certain thing is that these phones "annoy us all." While it is uncertain whether cell phones cause brain cancer, it is certainly safer not to use them for hours each day as many people do. Also, there needs to be a lot more cell phone courtesy. People should speak much more softly when using them and not use them in restaurants or other places where many people are nearby. I co-sponsored legislation to not allow cell phones to be used on airplanes except during emergencies. Language to study such a ban passed in the House version of the FAA bill, but was not included in the Senate version. However, it could be included in the final conference bill.

✓ **Taxes**

All taxes throughout our history have been passed at very low levels to tamp down any opposition. Then they just go up and up and up. This has been especially true of property taxes. Also because it sounds so wonderful to create parks, the people have been seduced into taking more and more

land off the tax rolls. We have done this at the same time police and teachers and others have been requesting more money. So the property taxes have had to keep going up even more. We have created so many parks at the federal, state and local level that a great many of them are used very little. I am not advocating closing any, but surely we should stop adding to them and start taking care of the ones we have. Many people do not realize how vital private property is to our freedom and our prosperity, and those who work in local government should be especially concerned about this.

✓ **Marriage Revival**

According to a new report by the Family Research Council, America's economic revival is tied to the effort to renew a strong marriage culture. The study showed that only 5.8% of married families lived in poverty in 2009. It also found that children from married families have stronger "economic mobility" as adults, meaning they are more likely to get good jobs and move to even better ones. I served for 7 1/2 years as Criminal Court Judge, trying felony criminal cases, and found that over 90% of felony defendants came from father-absent households. Young people need to be taught in high school about how harmful it can be economically, personally, and especially to children if they are not extremely careful in picking a marriage partner. Also, I read many years ago that 57% of marriages break up primarily due to money and arguments and disagreements over family finances. Smaller government would help strengthen families by taking less money from parents and children. Also, some women would like to stay home when their children are young but are unable to do so because federal, state and local governments are taking so much from their families in direct and indirect taxes.

✓ **Government Shutdowns**

The federal government has shut down 17 times since 1977, with the longest periods being 21 days in 1996 and 17 days in 1979. This year a shutdown was averted when an agreement was reached to cut \$38 billion off of what otherwise would have been a big increase in federal spending. I did not vote for this agreement for two reasons: (1) \$38 billion when we were facing a deficit of more than one and a half trillion was just not sufficient, and (2) the Congressional Budget Office said actually only \$352 million (or less than one-tenth of one percent) would be cut in this fiscal year. Cuts put off until future years, when they could be changed or eliminated by future Congresses, are just not sufficient.

✓ **Economic History**

Many people believe the only way to jumpstart the economy is to have some type of government jobs program. But the Gross National Product (the GNP as it was called then—now GDP) fell 24% from 1920 to 1921, a huge depression-like drop. Unemployment doubled to 11 percent in 1921. Presidents Harding and Coolidge both cut federal spending, which was already low. Altogether, spending and taxes were cut 50% in the 1920s, and 30% of the national debt was paid off. There were budget surpluses throughout the period, and unemployment fell to 1.8%, the lowest peacetime level in 100 years.

✓ **Technology Overload**

An article in the Washington Examiner said teachers are finding that all the new technology tools are "killing their time with children and 'dehumanizing' the teaching profession." A recent University of Maryland study found that spending so much time on computers, Blackberries, I-Pads, and other technology has made many young people unable to fully relate to other human beings. Not only is this addiction to screens harmful for people of all ages, it is very, very expensive personally and costly for

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the environment. If all the people who pride themselves on being environmentalists would unhook just one day a week (or even once a month) the savings for our Nation would be amazing. When the Washington Post got a few of its employees to try to go without using Blackberries or sending text-messages or e-mails for even a day, most could not do it and found out how addicted they had become.

✓ **Gas Prices**

The Congress passed in the mid-90s a roughly 3,000 acre expansion for oil drilling in the 19.8 million acre Alaska National Wildlife Refuge. This would have meant approximately one million barrels more oil each day, and gas prices would not be nearly as high as they are today. But President Clinton vetoed it. Now, the House has passed three bills to increase domestic oil production, but the President and the Senate are opposed, so the bills will not become law. In addition, the Administration is blocking an extension of the Keystone Pipeline from Canada through the Great Plains down to Texas. This project would add 20,000 construction and manufacturing jobs over the next two years and could when finished bring 500,000 more barrels of oil a day to the U.S. But, unfortunately we have a Secretary of Energy, backed by some environmentalists, who told the Wall Street Journal a couple of years ago that we need to pay the same price for gas as they do in Europe (it was then around \$8.00 a gallon). We do not need to produce all of our oil. But if we could just start producing a little more, OPEC and other foreign producers could not raise their prices so fast.

✓ **Abundant Resources**

The non partisan Congressional Research Service completed in early May a study of U.S. Fossil Fuel Resources. It concluded that the combined supply of oil, coal, and natural gas in the U.S. is the largest on Earth. The report said

that America's recoverable resources are far larger than those of Saudi Arabia (3rd largest), China (4th), and Canada (6th) combined. The problem is that there is no other country in which environmental radicals have so much money and power as in the U.S. But if our economy is ever going to fully recover, we are going to have to have more energy production here so we do not continue to be at the mercy of foreign producers.

✓ **Dodd-Frank**

The Dodd-Frank financial regulatory act will drive 1,000 small banks out of existence by the end of this decade according to the American Bankers Association. It was passed in reaction to Wall Street abuses by some giant companies but it created approximately 5,000 rules and regulations that have been extremely costly and burdensome for small companies. And the bill did nothing to reform Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the government corporations that were largely responsible for the problems we had in the first place. Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke said a few days ago that the Dodd-Frank bill had stifled credit and growth and not enough consideration had been given to its cost. It has certainly prolonged our recession, and CNN reported on June 8 that 48% of the people believe we will have another great depression within the next 12 months. Even many who did not go this far nonetheless had a negative view of the economy.

✓ **World Government**

We have given too much of our sovereignty and our money in recent years to international organizations like the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, NATO, the UN and others. World Government is too elitist, expensive, inefficient, and especially too far removed from control by the people. The IMF, which receives 17% of its money from the U.S., has been pro-

viding mega billions in the last few months bailing out governments in Europe. Sean Hannity, on his June 7 radio program, said it was "nuts" for Americans to have to spend billions to pay the salaries and pensions of Greek bureaucrats and retirees when we are so deeply in debt ourselves. I agree. One former U.S. head of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization said it should have been disbanded years ago. Now NATO has been fighting for years in the Middle East. Several of their bombs have gone astray and killed many women and children. This is not blamed on NATO by the victims' families, however. It is blamed on the U.S. since almost all NATO funding comes from us. We can have good relations with other countries without spending hundreds of billions we do not have and trying to run the whole world.

✓ **Pakistan Aid**

The Christian Science Monitor reported recently that the U.S. has given \$20.7 billion in aid to Pakistan since 2002, two-thirds for military aid. The Monitor asked: "What has Pakistan's Army done with the money? The short answer is: No one quite seems to know." The Publication quoted a Pakistan college professor as saying: "We've seen \$14 billion in military aid come in, but has militancy changed. If anything it has become more acute." Liberals found out years ago that foreign aid was unpopular. So they very falsely say that foreign aid is only around one percent of the federal budget. However, we spend many times that amount doing things all over the world through almost every department and agency in the federal government.

✓ **Redistricting**

Every 10 years, after the Census, state legislatures are given the responsibility of redistricting the U.S. House of Representatives. I hope that the Tennessee Legislature will leave the Second District basically as it is, as they have done following

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the last two Censuses. Knox, Blount, and Loudon Counties have been in the District almost the entire history of the State. Monroe and McMinn Counties have been in the Second District for the past 40 years. The Seymour and Kodak areas of Sevier County, which I have represented for the past 10 years, fit nicely into the District both geographically and economically. I would be happy to represent any County in East Tennessee. However, all the non-partisan analysts say it is best to not make drastic changes to districts so more people know who their Congressional representative is and in which district they live.

✓ **Pensions**

The New York Times reported in late April that public pensions, “once off limits, face budget cuts” and that an arbitrator had allowed Detroit to reduce its police pensions. The paper said state pension systems currently have a \$1.26 trillion shortfall. Unless we take drastic action now, all pensions will have to be cut in the near future or so much money will have to be printed that inflation will have the same effect. Everyone who wants to draw a Social Security or retirement check that will buy anything in just a very few years should be demanding that the federal government make major cuts in spending now before it becomes too late to do any good.

✓ **Motions to Recommit**

In the House, the minority party files what is called a Motion to Recommit on most major bills. These are always given the cover of some very popular idea, but they are really used as a way to send a bill back to committee in order to delay it, later defeat it, or often to try to get more money. Recent Motions have been made to oppose the so-called “Road to Nowhere,” commend the Navy Seals who killed Osama bin Laden, and to give a military pay raise. All of these things were already in the bill being

debated and/or in other bills. Those who wanted to both reduce federal spending and accomplish the very popular goal expressed in the Motion had to vote against these Motions to Recommit. Sometimes votes on these Motions are listed in the Newspapers without explaining what the true motives are. We are always happy to explain any vote if you simply call or write.

✓ **Draconian Cuts?**

Often over the years I have read or heard about big “cuts” in some federal department, agency, or program. Frequently, these cuts are described as “draconian.” However, if you read below the headlines, usually these so-called cuts are really just cuts in a proposed increase. Many times I have heard people express concerns about cuts in spending at Oak Ridge. However, every year, spending on government activities there has gone up, and they received a multi-billion dollar windfall in the stimulus package from the last Congress. Overall federal spending has gone way up every year. That is why we are in such a deep hole now. This year, the Congress is finally starting – possibly too late – to slow the big increase in spending. But on May 24, the Congressional Quarterly Today publication, which goes to all members, had a headline which read “Big Cuts Proposed to Farm Spending.” The actual chart, however, showed that the bill written about in the story – the Agricultural Appropriations bill – was going from \$125.2 billion to about \$125.5 billion, an actual increase of \$283 million or 0.2%. Big cut my foot.

✓ **Military Bands**

Almost everyone loves bands, but an analysis in mid-May by the Lexington Institute think tank said the Defense Department will spend \$50 billion on military bands over the next 50 years. Lexington Institute’s top officer said to spend this much on bands is “ridiculous.” The

Army, for example, has 35 active duty bands, 18 in the Army reserve, and more than 50 in the Army National Guard. Several military bands is acceptable. To have several hundred is not.

✓ **Huge Debt**

USA Today reported in early June that the federal government now has at least \$62 trillion in unfunded future liabilities. This debt comes out to almost \$574,000 for every family. Yet every group or organization that sends people from Tennessee to see me is not only unwilling for its funds to be cut, they want increases. It is the same for every member of Congress from every State. Yet if we do not make very large cuts, in every Department, and very soon, the Nation is going to face problems worse than any it has ever faced.

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We’ve Moved!

The Maryville office has now moved to the first floor of the Blount County Courthouse. My staff and I believe that this will be a more convenient location for just about everyone.

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Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 112th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

This speech was delivered on the Floor of the House on June 2, 2011 by Congressman Duncan.

Mr. Speaker, the Congressional Quarterly today has a headline that says, "Some House Republicans Showing Signs of War Fatigue." Unfortunately, this headline comes just the day after the Appropriations Defense Subcommittee has approved another \$119 billion for our overseas wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. That's \$10 billion a month and \$2.3 billion each week.

By the most conservative estimates, we have now spent over \$2 trillion in direct and indirect costs in Iraq and Afghanistan. Most of this money has gone into nation building rather than stopping or defending against any real threat.

We have turned the Department of Defense into the Department of Foreign Aid, and the American people are tired of it. They want us to stop rebuilding Iraq and Afghanistan and start taking care of our own people. We are spending billions and billions that we do not have—that we are having to borrow—on people who do not appreciate it unless they are on our payroll.

Alfred Regnery, publisher of the conservative American Spectator magazine, wrote last October that "Afghanistan has little strategic value" and "the war is one of choice rather than necessity." He added that it has been "a wasteful and frustrating decade."

The American people do not want, nor can we afford, endless, permanent wars. Nor do they want 11 or 12-year wars that last about three times as long as World War II.

You can never satisfy governments' appetite for money or land. They always want more.

Every gigantic bureaucracy always wants to expand its mission so it can get more funding. Every government agency always exaggerates the threats or problems it is confronting so it can get more money.

The Pentagon is a gigantic bureaucracy that will do everything within its tremendous power to keep getting more and more money from the taxpayers. But there have to be limits somewhere, and fiscal conservatives should be the ones most horrified by all the hundreds of billions we have poured, and continued to pour, down these Iraqi, Afghan, Libyan rat holes.

The American people and conservative Republicans all over this country are saying enough is enough. They want us to stop rebuilding Iraq and Afghanistan and paying for a useless war in Libya and start rebuilding the United States of America.

We are almost \$14 trillion in debt and headed much, much higher very, very soon. Soon, we will be printing so much money that our Social Security and other pensions will be worth very little. We have got to get our fiscal house in order. We have got to stop spending hundreds of billions all over the world and start taking care of our own people.

Georgie Anne Geyer, the conservative foreign policy columnist, wrote a few months after the Iraqi war started many years ago that "Americans will inevitably come to a point where they have to choose between a government that provides services at home or one that seeks empire across the globe."

Mr. Speaker, the American people reached that point a long time ago.

Hopefully, the Congress will soon follow their lead.

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