

To pay for our current national debt, which now stands at more than \$14 trillion, you and I and our children would each owe about \$45,000. Washington has recently been dominated by debate on how best to stop the overspending and reduce such a staggering mountain of debt. Two different budget plans are at the center of discussion: the first, from the House of Representatives, would fund the government through September of this year, and the second, from President Obama, is a federal budget proposal for next year.

At 4:30 a.m. Saturday, the House advanced its budget bill, which reduces nearly \$61 billion from the original 2011 budget. Many individual amendments, nearly 600 altogether, were submitted and more than 80 received votes. This new spirit of openness and inclusiveness in the legislative process is a healthy and constructive change in Congress.

Some of these amendments maintain funding for certain programs and some propose their elimination. An alternative plan was discussed to make across-the-board cuts to all programs, rather than ending or drastically defunding some of them. The bill, which I supported, will now go to the United States Senate for consideration.

Early last week, President Obama introduced his budget proposal for fiscal year 2012. The President's bill does not address burgeoning spending in major entitlement programs and projects another deficit of \$1.6 trillion next year, which would mean a record third straight trillion dollar deficit. □ As I have said before, such massive government overspending is unsustainable and leaves our nation economically vulnerable at a time when we need to gain economic strength. The spending culture in Washington has been so prevalent that a return to fiscal order requires extraordinary resolve and bold action.

While the House of Representatives' vote over the weekend is a small start at reducing this deficit, it is a step in the direction of stopping overspending. Moving forward we must accept the hard reality that restoring fiscal balance will require shared sacrifice and tough decisions. The stakes are high, but with common resolve we can get this done for the wellbeing of America.