

Every president since Woodrow Wilson has delivered a yearly State of the Union Address before a joint session of Congress, usually in January or early February. On Tuesday, President Obama delivered his fifth such address. I listened to the speech with special attentiveness to areas where Congress and the President might best be able to work constructively to address some of the pressing challenges before us as a nation. You can see a video of my brief reaction to the speech at: <http://www.1011now.com/home/headlines/Obama-to-Stress-Jobs-Afghan-War-Troop-Withdrawal-190895901.html>

I thought the President laid down a reasonable and responsible plan for our strategy in Afghanistan. He also rightly stressed a new focus on manufacturing, reviving the 'made in the USA' label, and expanding upon the important progress we've made in clean energy production and conservation. Both areas are important components of our economic success in Nebraska.

I was disappointed, though, that the President did not take a more serious approach to addressing our federal debt. The President must lay out a specific course for controlling spending. Stopping the overspending and restoring fiscal order should be our top priority with the federal debt approaching \$17 trillion.

I have supported two legislative proposals recently that demonstrate the seriousness in which some in Congress are taking the debt. The No Budget, No Pay Act directs the House and the Senate, which has not passed a budget in four years, to adopt a budget resolution for Fiscal Year 2014 by April 15, 2013. Today, I voted to pass a measure preventing automatic pay increases for federal employees, including Members of Congress. Merit increases would still be available to federal employees.

Reducing the debt will help the economy; it will ease economic uncertainty and help create new opportunities for American families. We must work together to fight against the overspending problem in Washington. It is crushing our future. We must find an appropriate solution – and the House of Representatives cannot do this alone.