



IN PELLA, IOWANS FIND WAYS TO HOLD DOWN FEDERAL DEBT

Two Former Congressmen Urge 2016 Candidates to Highlight Fiscal Plans

Pella, Iowa – A group of Iowans today got a chance to do something that has long eluded Congress: Make tough budget choices to put the federal deficit on a sustainable downward path.

They enthusiastically tackled the job in the hope that these kinds of decisions, which they made through an interactive exercise on the federal budget in Pella, will also be made by the 2016 presidential candidates in the campaign.

Students, community leaders and other interested citizens -- along with former Iowa Congressmen Leonard Boswell, a Democrat, and Tom Tauke, a Republican -- worked on the exercise at a Central College auditorium this morning.

The program was sponsored by First Budget, a non-partisan initiative to encourage voters and candidates to focus on the need for more responsible fiscal policies.

Working in small groups to consider an array of tax and spending options, many of the participants found ways to reduce projected deficits -- in some cases by hundreds of billions of dollars -- over the coming decade.

Washington could learn a lesson from such exercises, where participants have repeatedly shown an ability to consider different points of view and reach significant compromises to help improve the nation's fiscal picture.

As the two former lawmakers pointed out, it is critical for elected officials to reach such compromises in Washington. The next president's first budget -- the next administration's initial fiscal proposals -- will be particularly important.

“Our national debt is growing faster than our economy. That is not sustainable,” Tauke said. “As the 2016 campaign kicks off, it's more important than ever that we engage voters and ask presidential candidates to address this critical issue and tell us how their first budget will put us on a path to stop this ongoing increase in our national debt.”

If the nation remains on its current path, the growing national debt will result in slower economic growth, a lower U.S. standard of living, and an inability to deal with new challenges. In addition, a larger percentage of the federal budget is being used to finance today's spending and yesterday's promises, rather than to build a better future for the next generation.

“It is critically important that -- beyond listing the negative consequences of growing national debt for all Americans -- we are also framing the issue in a way that shows how adversely and unfairly future generations will be impacted,” Boswell said. “My grandchildren will have to pay

the price for inaction. Encouraging the next president to share how he or she will structure the next administration's first budget is a good beginning.”

Participants in today's exercise discussed and debated possible policy changes in health care, Social Security, defense, taxes and other areas. In doing so, they weighed concerns such as inflation, threats to national security, the treatment of veterans, transportation needs and economic equity.

“As a Central College student and economics major, I thought this experience and exercise was a good opportunity to put theory into practice and to see different generations' perspectives on certain issues,” said Zach Matter, one of the participants. “Everyone at my table gained knowledge, whether they were students or someone in the business community or the congressmen going around the room.”

First Budget will organize similar public engagement events throughout the year in Iowa and elsewhere.

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First Budget is a joint nonpartisan initiative of [The Concord Coalition](#) and the [Campaign to Fix the Debt](#) to raise awareness of the dangers posed by the nation's unsustainable budget policies and make solving this problem a high priority for the 2016 presidential candidates, starting with the early nominating contests in Iowa and New Hampshire. Visit firstbudget.org to learn more and follow us on twitter: [@concordc](#) and [@fixthedebt](#).