



## Present Status of the Balanced Budget Amendment Campaign

By Loren J. Enns, President, CSNDS

When Ronald Reagan left office in 1989, the national movement for a balanced budget amendment (BBA) lost its greatest advocate. His passionate support had solidified the BBA as one of the core planks of the Republican party platform, ensuring its national prominence for decades to come. Reagan's departure temporarily halted the BBA campaign in Congress; however, it was far more devastating for the campaign in the states.



Aside from the three-quarters vote necessary to ratify an amendment, the two-thirds vote required to call a convention is the most onerous under the Constitution — unlike the congressionally required two-thirds vote to propose an amendment, which can easily be reattempted each year. Getting 34 states, with two chambers each, to call for a convention is theoretically possible, but so challenging it has never been done. For example, the state BBA campaign was launched in 1975 and took 8 years to reach its zenith at 32 states.

Accordingly, the loss of its only national advocate in Reagan, who had united dozens of states in support of a BBA, effectively killed the movement. With Reagan gone, 16 states were conned into rescinding their convention calls between 1989 – 2012.

Meanwhile, the congressional BBA campaign was mothballed until 1994 when Republicans re-took the U.S. House via the Contract with America. One of its core tenets was a balanced budget amendment. Unfortunately, the Republican-controlled Senate failed (by one vote) to pass the BBA sent over from the Republican-controlled House. That was 1996 and the

last time Congress ever came close to proposing a BBA. Since then, the U.S. national debt has more than quintupled from \$4 trillion to \$21 trillion.

The modern state campaign for a balanced budget amendment began in 2012 with 16 of the original 32 states. It was born amongst a group of self-funded citizen activists who, amazingly, managed to attain 16 state resolutions over a 6-year span without any outside funding. Due to that success however, opponents began to attack the campaign, convincing 4 states to rescind their applications – leaving the present total of 28 states.



In 2018, the BBA campaign hit a wall. While it lost no states, it gained no states either. As such, the CSNDS has expanded its Board of Directors with the high-profile individuals necessary to lead the campaign forward. With the proper resources, CSNDS hopes to launch a 10-state *Fix the Debt to Secure Our Future* educational campaign targeting state legislators, citizen groups and college students. With the proper public education, the state campaign should be able to reach the 33 states necessary to move Congress to propose a BBA, or alternately, the 34 states necessary to propose a BBA via convention.

That, or our country will soon experience a downward economic spiral which could rival the Great Depression or even exceed it.