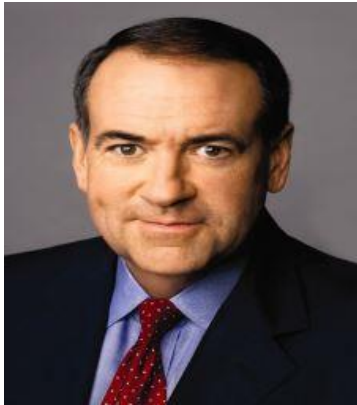


Scott Walker is the right leader at the right time to take on the national debt.



By [Gov. Mike Huckabee](#)

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This week, former Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker became the national face of the state-led movement to propose a balanced budget amendment. In his role as National Honorary Chairman of the Center for State-led National Debt Solutions, Walker will champion an issue that first came to nationwide prominence when Ronald Reagan recognized that “We don’t have a trillion-dollar debt because we haven’t taxed enough; we have a trillion-dollar debt because we spend too much.”

Ultimately, President Reagan’s leadership led to the crafting of a balanced budget amendment proposal which passed in the U.S. Senate in 1982 but failed in the Democrat-controlled House. In 1996, House Speaker Newt Gingrich led a similar effort, which passed in the House, but failed in the Senate by a single vote.

However, as Governor Walker takes up the challenge advanced by his predecessors, he will be facing an entirely different fiscal landscape. The one trillion-dollars in accumulated federal debt that prompted the U.S. Senate to take action in 1982, is roughly equivalent to the amount Congress currently borrows every year, to fund its deficits. The national

debt has soared to over twenty-two trillion dollars or one-hundred eighty-thousand dollars per U.S. taxpayer, and the interest alone is soon projected to surpass spending on national defense.

So why hasn't Congress fixed this problem? Gramm-Rudman-Hollings, the Debt Ceiling, PAYGO and the Line-item Veto were all designed and enacted to control government spending. And yet none of these instruments interrupted the steady acceleration of debt. As legislative restrictions became uncomfortable, Congress simply softened their language or replaced them with new, more accommodating budgetary policies.

This abuse of congressional power is exactly the kind of scenario our Founders tried to protect against in the intricate system of checks and balances they designed in the U.S. Constitution. Among those balances, was their design for constitutional amendment. Under Article V, either a majority vote in both houses of Congress may advance a proposal, or, on the application of two-thirds of the states, a convention for proposing amendments may be convened. Whether passed by Congress or by state-led convention, any proposed amendment must be ratified by a three-fourths majority of the states.

The effort Governor Walker is now leading will encourage the use of the state-initiated method for the proposal of a balanced budget amendment. Though the high threshold of consensus required to trigger such a convention has never been achieved, the debt crisis may become its inspiration. According to CBO projections, unprecedented debt to GDP levels will lead to lower productivity and wages, higher interest rates and increasing fiscal instability.

Forty years ago, America passed on an opportunity to prevent the dangerous debt vulnerabilities we now face. Governor Walker realizes that, on its current path, this nation doesn't have forty more years of stability to make up its mind. Whether proposed by Congress or the states, timing has now become critical for constitutionally mandated fiscal reform.