THE TAMPA TRIBUNE
and The Tampa Times

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Published: August 1, 2011

There has been a lot of talk about getting our nation's fiscal house in order. While some in Washington would like to simply fix up the front yard in order to improve "curb appeal," I believe that the time has come to give our fiscal house a new foundation and fundamentally reform the way our government spends money.

The U.S. government has carried a federal budget deficit for most of the past century, becoming far too comfortable with irresponsible spending. In recent years, costly government programs such as stimulus plans and bailouts have caused annual deficits to skyrocket, adding to the nation's towering mountain of debt. Interest payments on outstanding debt now represent the largest budget item after Social Security/Medicare and defense spending.

The lack of fiscal discipline and the escalating costs of the federal debt have created a dangerous combination that necessitates action to tie lawmakers' hands and prevent them from dipping into a seemingly bottomless cookie jar.

A balanced budget amendment would encourage Washington to restrain the unchecked growth in federal spending, force the American government to live within its means and separate lawmakers from the political incentives that spur them to deficit-spend. It will help Washington start living within its means just like American families must do.

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