

**Rep. West on Failed Balanced Budget Amendment: Congress Showed American People It Wasn't Serious About Fiscal Responsibility (Fox News)**

**Video:**

**GRETA VAN SUSTEREN, FOX NEWS HOST:** Chances are, you balance your budget. Well, that's you, that's not what Congress does! Certainly doesn't do it with your money. For Congress, the sky is the limit! That no-limit spending was reinforced a few hours ago when the House rejected a balanced budget amendment. Those who oppose the balanced budget amendment say it would curb the necessary flexibility needed and would harm the economy.

**Congressman Allen West** joins us. Congressman, I don't suspect that you're too pleased tonight with the fact that there's no balanced budget amendment favorable vote in the House.

**REP. ALLEN WEST, R-FLA.:** No, I'm absolutely not. As a matter of fact, I just landed back down here in Fort Lauderdale about an hour-and-a-half ago, and it was a very sad trip for me to come back because a lot of people were on the airplane and they wanted me to talk about that balanced budget amendment.

Look, the bottom line is that everyone that had that little red "N" next to their name, they don't take it serious that we have a \$15 trillion debt, the fact that we have a debt-to-GDP ratio of 101 percent, the fact that in the last three -- under last three years, we've added \$4.4 trillion to the debt.

And what we just told the American people today is that we're not serious about disciplining ourselves and we're not serious about creating an environment of fiscal responsibility in Washington D.C.

**VAN SUSTEREN:** But those who are in favor of the balanced budget amendment -- or I mean,

those who are opposed, rather, say that if it were passed, it would not give much flexibility to meet any sort of emergency demands, like a crisis of war or another recession. But within this balanced budget, was there not flexibility written, so that if we were at war or there was a vote taken because we were in a desperate economic situation, so that, you know, those things could be addressed? Is that right? Is that what was in this amendment?

**WEST:** You're absolutely right. And as a matter of fact, one of the things about this balanced budget amendment was that you were able to -- if it came to having to raise taxes, it would take a majority vote of members present -- of all the House, rather, I'm sorry -- instead of having a super-majority.

And this is the exact same balanced budget amendment that 16 years ago passed the House with 300 votes. We needed 290 today. And many of those Democrat members who voted for it back 16 years ago decided today was not the right time. As a matter of fact, the Majority Whip said now is not the time for a balanced budget amendment. So I don't know if he wants the debt to get to \$20 trillion.

And the other thing that we have to understand, Greta, is that if we continue to have this out-of-control spending in Washington, D.C., then we're never going to create the right environment for job growth in this country because the federal government will continue to waste the American taxpayer dollar, which means that capital is not down where it should be to create the investment, the ingenuity and the innovation to grow our economy.

**VAN SUSTEREN:** All right, you're a first-year freshman congressman. I know you're disappointed by this. Are you surprised? And what's your thought on the Republican leadership?

**WEST:** Well, I think that it was very -- well, it was very reinforcing for me that they brought two different balanced budget amendments before the conference. We had a good discussion, and we decided that this would be the right one to bring up because it really showed that we want to find an ability to work with the people on the other side of the aisle.

We brought up a balanced budget amendment that passed the House some years ago, when the debt of the United States of America was only about \$4 trillion to \$5 trillion. So why would it

not pass now, when we have an even graver situation?

So I think that the leadership did very well in bringing up an opportunity for us to get our fiscal house in order. I'm very appalled and truly disgusted about the fact that after this measure failed, there were people on the other side of the aisle that began to clap.

**VAN SUSTEREN:** Well, you know, it seems to me -- the way I understand this is that the balanced budget amendment as written makes it harder to spend beyond our means. It doesn't make it impossible when we need it. That -- I mean, that's really the issue. I mean, you're not so much balancing the budget, but (INAUDIBLE) it really is sort of putting the brakes on Congress and telling you, Look, you know, you got to figure out what the problem is. It puts the brakes on Congress.

**WEST:** It absolutely does. And what it does is it forces us to do what every American does, what our businesses and small businesses do, is to live within our means. It forces us to truly be not just elected officials but leaders. Leaders have to make some hard decisions so that you just can't come along and say, This is something I want to spend money on.

You know, we've got to make sure that it's within the revenues that are coming in before we create those outlays.

**VAN SUSTEREN:** You know what...

**WEST:** And so I think that we really let down the American people.

**VAN SUSTEREN:** But you know, it happens all the time. I mean, it's really a question of, you know, like -- you know, the brakes have been put on Congress because Congress hasn't been doing its job. Congress can't even fund the -- I mean, fund -- put a budget together. We have -- you know, we have to have continuing resolutions that fund it. We have all these deadlines that aren't met. We have all -- I mean, there's -- I mean, it really is not -- it's not such a big surprise, is it?

**WEST:** Well, it's such a big surprise for me because coming from the United States military, 22 years there, we know how to prioritize. We know how to function. We don't sit around and wait for crisis action mode to kick in.

We've got 12 appropriations bills. We need to get to the point where we are prioritizing those appropriations bills, and the top tier of those appropriations bills, maybe tier one, they should probably be done biennially and not try to do it every other -- every year.

So I think there's a lot of structural reforms that we need to have. This was a great first step, but once again, we showed that we're not willing to discipline ourselves and we're looking to just continue down the same path of fiscal irresponsible.

But I think that with the new crop of folks that we have up there in Washington, D.C., I'm not going to give up and I'm going to continue to press hard.

**VAN SUSTEREN:** Congressman, thank you, sir.

**WEST:** Thank you, and a Happy Thanksgiving to you.

**VAN SUSTEREN:** Happy Thanksgiving to you, too.

For entire video: <http://video.foxnews.com/v/1283906598001/>

<http://www.foxnews.com/on-air/on-the-record/2011/11/19/rep-west-failed-balanced-budget-amendment-congress-showed-american-people-it-wasnt-seriou#ixzz1eEDftRD9>