



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on July 6, 2011

Rand Paul: We'll Filibuster Until Debt Ceiling Proposals Are Made

As the August 2 deadline for the debt ceiling approaches, Republicans and Democrats are preparing for battle over the vote. In bold language, Republicans have demanded that major spending cuts accompany any increase of the debt limit. Bipartisan talks on the subject have achieved nothing, as Democrats have sidestepped any mention of the debt ceiling. Some elected officials have grown frustrated with this tactic, especially Tea Party favorite Rand Paul. In a clip from C-SPAN's *NewsMakers*, the Kentucky Senator announced his intent to filibuster any legislation unrelated to the debt ceiling:



I was part of a group this week that said, "No more, were tired of talking about extraneous issues." Weve had not one minute of debate about the debt ceiling in any committee. Im part of the freshmen group that said, "No more. Were not going to let them go to any [other] issue if we have a say in it." Next week, we will filibuster until we talk about the debt ceiling, until we talk about proposals, declared Senator Paul.

According to Paul, Republicans are willing to concede on raising the debt ceiling, but only on very certain terms:

[W]e will actually vote in favor of raising the debt ceiling next week if we can, but it will be contingent on passing a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. Im not completely without the sense that we may need to raise the debt ceiling. But I will only do it if we have significant budgetary reform, and to me that means you have to balance your budget every year.

Senator Pauls assertion is reminiscent of that [made](#) by Senator Jim DeMint (R-S.C.) in April: I will oppose any attempt to vote to raise the limit on our \$14 trillion debt until Congress passes the balanced-budget amendment.

Fox News explains:

A balanced-budget amendment would prohibit the U.S. government from running a deficit. Such a provision would take a two-thirds vote in Congress, in addition to ratification by the states.

Despite the allure of a balanced budget amendment, critics have noted a variety of drawbacks to it. OMB Watch, for example, [lists](#) a number of reasons to oppose such a solution:

1. A Balanced Budget Amendment swaps fiscal responsibility for a one-size-fits-all approach to a constantly changing economy.
2. The judiciary would likely become an integral part of the budget process (in order to enforce government adherence to the amendment).
3. Budget balance can only be determined after the fiscal year ends.



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4. A balanced budget amendment could require super majority votes on many seemingly non-budget-related bills, frustrating other areas of lawmaking.
5. Congress could simply increase spending by hiding it in the tax code.

On a broader note, The John Birch Society opposes a constitutional convention for any purpose, whether it be for a balanced budget amendment or for term limits, asserting that if the Constitution were simply enforced as is, there would be no need to make any revisions to it. The Society's Larry Greenley [observes](#): "All three branches of the federal government routinely disregard major portions of the Constitution. In other words, if the federal government is prepared to ignore portions of the Constitution as it stands, one would have to assume that an amended Constitution would be ignored as well.

Second, Greenley points out that the Founding Fathers equipped the states with a powerful tool to oppose unconstitutional actions by the federal government: state nullification.

Similarly, in a letter written by Charles Alan Wright of the University of Texas Law School to Texas State Representative Clint Hackney, Wright [outlined](#) what he perceived to be the dangerous nature of opening up a constitutional convention:

My own belief, however, is that a constitutional convention cannot be confined to a particular subject, and that anything it adopts and that the states ratify will be valid and will take effect.

Wright cites historical evidence to prove his assertion:

We have only one precedent, the Convention in Philadelphia in 1787. It was summoned "for the sole and express purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation and reporting to Congress and the several Legislatures such alterations and provisions therein." From the very beginning it did not feel confined by the call and gave us a totally new Constitution that completely replaced the Articles of Confederation. I see no reason to believe that a constitutional convention 200 years later could be more narrowly circumscribed.

Constitutionalists assert that the simplest way to rein in federal spending is to return to the constitutional form of government that was originally intended by the Founding Fathers which could and would operate on a low budget, and therefore not require such drastic measures as the addition of an amendment or raising of the debt ceiling.

Of course, that would mean the elimination of a plethora of unconstitutional federal agencies, such as the Department of Education and the Department of Homeland Security. With the exception of Texas Republican Congressman Ron Paul, GOP Senate hopeful Sharron Angle, and a handful of others, very few Republicans have been willing to make such drastic proposals.



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