

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia: Mr. Speaker, I oppose this legislation, and I would like to focus my comments on the balanced budget amendment because the dirty little secret about the balanced budget amendment is that it does not require a balanced budget.

It will actually make it more difficult for future Congresses to balance the budget, so the title is just misleading.

Let's go through some of the provisions.

The first provision of the balanced budget amendment requires a budget not in balance to require a three-fifths vote in the House and the Senate. The fact is every budget that we considered this year--in fact, most of the budgets, virtually every budget in the last 10 years--was not balanced in the first year. So all of those budgets, including the Republican Ryan plan, even the Republican Study Committee plan, would have required a three-fifths vote to pass in both the House and the Senate.

Now, the deficit reduction requires tough votes, often career-ending votes. The 1993 Clinton budget that was on the way to paying off the national debt, if we hadn't changed it after 2001, we would have paid off the entire debt held by the public. By now, we would owe nothing to China, Japan, and Saudi Arabia. But that didn't get three-fifths of the vote, and 50 Democrats lost their seats as a result of that plan.

Likewise, this year's Republican Ryan plan, which repeals Medicare as we know it, is a good deficit reduction plan. Didn't get anywhere close to three-fifths, and Democrats have already picked up one seat in the special election because the Republican candidate supported the Republican Ryan plan.

So deficit reduction requires tough votes, and increasing the votes needed to pass it will not help pass a deficit reduction plan.

Now, while it's harder to pass a deficit reduction plan because of the three-fifth's requirement, increasing the deficit can still occur. Last December, we passed \$800 billion in additional deficits by extending the tax cuts. Those still could have been passed under this legislation because you only need a simple majority to cut taxes. And a budget which even proposes additional tax cuts and even higher deficits would require the same three-fifths vote as the tough deficit reduction would require.

Tax cuts can pass by a simple majority, but tax increases will require a two-thirds vote. Common sense will tell you that that will make it harder to balance the budget.

The two-thirds provision to spend more than 18 percent of GDP will obviously put pressure on

Medicare and Medicaid, since we haven't been to 18 percent of GDP since Medicare was enacted. You can cut the benefits with a simple majority, but to save the programs with additional taxes will require a two-thirds vote.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we know that we should not be distracted by misleading titles. We should notice that the legislation will make it harder to actually balance the budget because it increases the number of Members who might have to cast career-ending votes, makes it virtually impossible to raise revenues or close loopholes. It will compel deep cuts in Social Security and Medicare, and you can't cure that with a simple nice little title.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this legislation.