

Democrats coerced into decision to increase deficit

(First published in Scripps Treasure Coast Newspapers on January 14, 2008)

I want to applaud the Scripps Treasure Coast Newspapers opinion staff for the editorial, "Does anyone care about the national debt? (Dec. 26)" As a member of the Blue Dog Coalition, a group of 47 Democrats committed to eliminating the national debt and returning fiscal responsibility to Washington, I believe there is not enough written by the press on the problem the national debt presents to our economy and our children's future.

At the stroke of midnight this past New Years Eve, 23 million Americans were about to see a major income tax increase as the result of enforcing the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT) provision of the IRS Code.

The Bush Administration in its 2008 budget included the estimated \$50 billion in windfall income that the tax increase provided. Democrats, led by the Blue Dogs, passed a provision within hours of taking the majority to restore fiscal responsibility to Congress by reinstating PAYGO, the pay-as-you-go rule Republicans eliminated in 2002. PAYGO simply means that the government can't go into debt to buy something new. In this case, if you cut \$50 billion in expected income that the AMT was to provide, you have to find \$50 billion in spending cuts.

Democrats in the House twice voted and passed an AMT bill that prevented the income tax increase without increasing our national debt. We did it by eliminating tax loopholes and no-longer-needed tax subsidies for large corporations making record profits. Twice the president and Republicans in the Senate blocked its passage, forcing Congress to have to make a false choice: raise taxes on 23 million Americans or increase the federal deficit \$50 billion. I voted against increasing taxes on thousands of middle class families in my district who are struggling with high gas prices, college tuition, out-of-control property taxes and skyrocketing homeowners and health insurance.

This blatant act of partisan politics to force fiscal conservatives like myself to vote against PAYGO to stop a tax increase may succeed in giving the Republicans a campaign ad against Democrats like myself next November, but their political victory was won by increasing an already \$9 trillion dollar debt by \$50 billion. The losers unfortunately were our children and grandchildren who are going to have to pay the \$50 billion back with interest. Congratulations.

Tim Mahoney

House of Representatives

16th District

Palm Beach Gardens