

Mahoney Statement During Blue Dog Coalition Special Order Hour

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Blue Dog Special Order Hour

Mr. MAHONEY of Florida. I thank my good friend from Arkansas.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of Florida's 16th Congressional District and am a proud voice in support of restoring fiscal discipline to Congress. I am very proud to be a Blue Dog.

When I was thinking about what I wanted to talk to the American people about tonight, I decided that the best way to share my feelings, my views in terms of fiscal discipline and why I am a Blue Dog, gets back to something that is near and dear to me.

Just a week and a half ago, I was a businessman. I had never held an elected office. And the reason I decided to leave private life and come to Congress is because I was worried about government's out-of-control spending that was hurting our economy. More importantly, that was hurting our innovative economy, and to make it very simple for all, was hurting the future of my daughter and all of the children of this country if we don't get our fiscal house in order.

When I take a look at the Blue Dog plan, the 12-point plan for budget reform, I look at the points and I think back to my experience as a businessman. There are several things that I would like to highlight tonight that I can relate to, and every American involved in a business can relate to.

The first point is point number one on the plan which requires a balanced budget. In business it is requiring a profit. A balanced budget is something that makes sense for government, it makes sense for business, and the Blue Dogs are proposing that we make a balanced budget a constitutional amendment requiring that this House, that this Congress, balance the books.

The second thing I would like to talk about is point number four which requires agencies to put their fiscal house in order. That is really getting into financial control. As my colleague from Illinois, Congressperson BEAN, pointed out, 16 of 23 major Federal agencies can't issue a simple audit of the books. That is unacceptable in business, and that should be unacceptable here in Congress.

What the Blue Dogs propose is that we would propose legislation that would freeze any Federal agency that can't properly balance their books. We would not allow it in business, and we shouldn't allow it here in Congress.

Point five, we want to make Congress tell taxpayers how much they are spending. This gets to a concept in business called management accountability. What the Blue Dogs are proposing is that any bill that calls for more than \$50 million in new spending must be put to a roll call vote. By putting it to a roll call vote, what that does is it forces every Member of Congress to stand up and go on record for their constituents to see how fiscally responsible they are.

The next point I would like to highlight is point number ten which requires honest cost estimates for every bill that Congress votes on.

In business, we call this a business plan. Prior to undertaking any new endeavor, what a competent manager would ask for is a plan that sets out the goals and objectives of the proposed venture, in this case a proposed piece of legislation.

And then as part of that plan, he would ask to have a cost estimate of what the investment would be. That is a very important issue.

What the Blue Dogs propose is that every conference report and bill that comes to the floor of the House be accompanied by a cost estimate prepared by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office.

These are just a few of the points, a few of the agenda points that the Blue Dog coalition is working on.

Let me reiterate what many of my colleagues have said. Fiscal responsibility is a critical issue. It is an issue of competitiveness. It is an issue of making sure that our children are not being taxed with runaway budget deficits. People that say it doesn't matter or it is not as important as a percentage of GDP are wrong, and I am proud to be part of a group, the Blue Dog Coalition, that is committed, Mr. Speaker, to addressing these issues in the 110th Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back to my good friend from Arkansas.

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