

THE CONSTITUTION PROJECT



Safeguarding Liberty, Justice & the Rule of Law

The Constitution Project Urges Caution on Vote on Balanced Budget Constitutional Amendment

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WASHINGTON- As Congress prepares to vote on whether to pass a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution as part of a broader deficit reduction plan, Virginia Sloan, President of The Constitution Project (TCP) and Mickey Edwards, a former Member of Congress (R-OK) and Co-Chair of TCP's Constitutional Amendment Committee, called on lawmakers to deliberate carefully before resorting to such an extreme measure.

According to Ms. Sloan, "It was no accident that the Founders wrote a Constitution that would be difficult to amend. They believed that a stable constitutional structure is central to our democracy and that policymakers should exercise restraint in amending the Constitution. The country has amended the Constitution only 27 times in over 200 years (including the Bill of Rights)."

Despite the current political difficulties Congress and the president face regarding raising the debt limit, they can - if they wish - simply balance the budget. The Founders deliberately made the process of adopting constitutional amendments extraordinarily difficult, recognizing that political goals may be short-lived, and, in the future, be easier or less urgent to resolve. As a consequence, however, the process for repealing unwise amendments is equally difficult. Therefore, the Founders suggested, among other cautions, considering whether there are means other than an amendment by which the desired objective can be accomplished.

"Over the past few decades, constitutional amendment proposals have unfortunately been used as a political tool to demonstrate the strong feelings policymakers have about an issue. They should not be used as a kind of default mechanism when legislative solutions to policy problems hit a wall, especially when there are other tools at its disposal that could accomplish the same goals," said Mickey Edwards.

Since its release in 1999, TCP's bipartisan report—[*Great and Extraordinary Occasions: Developing Guidelines for Constitutional Change*](#)—has become widely regarded as a seminal publication on the context for constitutional change in the United States.

Established in 1997, The Constitution Project (TCP) is known for its ability to bring together unlikely allies—experts and practitioners from across the political spectrum—in order to promote and safeguard America’s founding charter. TCP is working to reform the nation’s broken criminal justice system and to strengthen the rule of law by undertaking scholarship, consensus policy reforms, advocacy and public education. TCP was born out of the belief that we must cast aside the labels that divide us, in order to keep our Constitution and our democracy strong.