

## REPUBLICAN CONTRACT WITH AMERICA <sup>1994</sup>

*As Republican Members of the House of Representatives and as citizens seeking to join that body we propose not just to change its policies, but even more important, to restore the bonds of trust between the people and their elected representatives.* (Note: Presented to the American people by House members in 1994.)

On the first day of the 104th Congress, the new Republican majority will immediately pass the following major reforms, aimed at restoring the faith and trust of the American people in their government:

- **FIRST**, require all laws that apply to the rest of the country also apply equally to the Congress;
- **SECOND**, select a major, independent auditing firm to conduct a comprehensive audit of Congress for waste, fraud or abuse;
- **THIRD**, cut the number of House committees, and cut committee staff by one-third;
- **FOURTH**, limit the terms of all committee chairs;
- **FIFTH**, ban the casting of proxy votes in committee;
- **SIXTH**, require committee meetings to be open to the public;
- **SEVENTH**, require a three-fifths majority vote to pass a tax increase;
- **EIGHTH**, guarantee an honest accounting of our Federal Budget by implementing zero base-line budgeting.



Thereafter, within the first 100 days of the 104th Congress, we shall bring to the House Floor the following bills, each to be given full and open debate, each to be given a clear and fair vote and each to be immediately available this day for public inspection and scrutiny.

### 10. THE CITIZEN LEGISLATURE ACT:

A first-ever vote on term limits to replace career politicians with citizen legislators. (Description below)



Citizen Legislature Act Summary: This resolution provides for consideration of two joint resolutions which propose amendments to the constitution limiting the number of terms members of the Senate and the House of Representatives can serve. The first joint resolution (identical to H.J. Res. 38 as introduced in the 103rd Congress) limits the number of Senate terms to two and the number of House terms to six. The second joint resolution (identical to H.J. Res. 160 as introduced in the 103rd Congress) also limits Senators to two terms, but it limits members of the House to three terms. Under the terms of this resolution, the joint resolution with the text of H.J. Res. 38 will be debated first and the first amendment in order will be a substitute consisting of H.J. Res. 160.

Background: The idea of limiting the tenure of elected officials has recurred through our history, but it has become more popular in the last few years. In 1992, 14 states passed initiatives limiting the tenure of federal legislators. Two of these laws, however, have been challenged and found unconstitutional in court. The U.S. Supreme Court will review the ruling by the Arkansas Supreme Court. Since there is a chance the high court will uphold the state court's ruling, a constitutional amendment may be necessary to limit congressional tenure.

(Editor comments: Wyoming is one of the states to put the question of term limits to a vote of the electorate. In 1992, 77% of Wyoming voters approved limiting U.S. House members to three terms (six years). That restriction was declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court, ruling it would take a constitutional amendment [as promised in the Contract with America] to place such a restriction on terms. Voters also (77% of them) approved limiting the five state executive branch elected officials (Governor, etc.) to two four-year terms, the State Senate to three four-year terms and the State House to three two-year terms. The Wyoming Legislature amended the House term limits to six two-year terms. In 2004, shortly before the first legislators would have been affected, the matter was litigated and the Wyoming Supreme Court ruled the enactment of term limits by statute as unconstitutional. The Court did not rule that term limits, per se, are unconstitutional, just that doing it by statute was the wrong approach. Term limits in Wyoming would have to be enacted by constitutional amendment. A vote toward that end has not been allowed by the Wyoming legislature.)

There was much fanfare made about the promises made in the Republican Contract with America. Incoming House members such as Barbara Cubin made a grand production of signing the document. She and others who dishonored the commitment have used the escape clause that such legislation was never enacted so the promise was moot. But even without enabling legislation, which those same Republicans did not try hard to introduce or pass, the purpose of the promise, as stated in its introduction was: "... to replace career politicians with citizen legislators."

Some who made the pledge, honored it. For a Wyoming legislator like Barbara Cubin, who well knew the sentiments of Wyoming voters, to ignore a public promise is un-Wyoming. Mrs. Cubin has become the "career politician" the incoming group of US House members in 1994 abhorred.

## The federal debt

Promises are made to be broken, it is said. And, on the federal level, when it comes to balancing the budget, that is proven in a major way.

Can you imagine if the City of Cheyenne and Laramie County government were legally allowed to outspend their revenues? To borrow even more against the future? Both entities would be facing bankruptcy, with less revenue than could satisfy even the basic requirements. The City has particularly shown no proclivity to curtail spending or practice fiscal responsibility.

But the federal government does it every day, every week, every month, almost every year - without breaking a sweat.

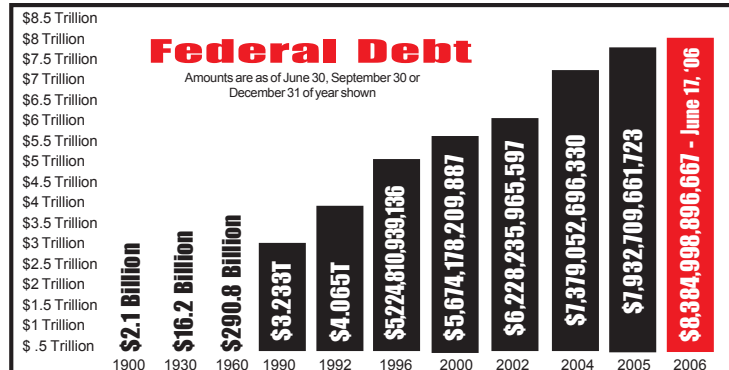
A graph on page 12 shows how Revenues and Spending have increased (or decreased) under presidents going back to Truman and up to present. The Table below indicates the incredible increase in national debt over many years.

Some startling factoids:

- 1.) The federal debt increases \$1.75 billion PER DAY!
- 2.) The last period of time the national debt went down or even stabilized from year to year was in the 1950's.
- 3.) Even during years with a budget surplus, the debt increases because of the interest cost in carrying the debt.
- 4.) The debt since 1994 (the year Barbara Cubin went to Congress) has increased almost twofold (from \$4.7 trillion to almost \$8.4 trillion. 78.7%!!
- 5.) It took 142 years (1850 to 1992) for the federal debt to reach \$4.0 trillion. It took but 14 years to double that amount.
- 6.) If it takes a reader two hours to read and digest an issue of the Cheyenne Herald, the national debt grows by almost \$150 million during that time.
- 7.) The new federal debt limit has been raised to \$9 trillion. So what? Runaway spending and entitlement requirements will take the debt wherever it goes.
- 8.) The national debt burden on every man, woman and child in the U.S. is today approximately \$28,000. That assumes a population of 300 million.

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