

Loebsack Column: Cutting Congress' Pay

Written by Congressman Dave Loebsack
Tuesday, 12 February 2013 09:40

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In a time when our economy continues to struggle and we face an unsustainable debt, it is more important than ever to hold Members of Congress accountable to the citizens that they represent. Far too many lowans are out of work or underemployed, and struggle each day to make ends meet. At the same time, Members of Congress have not seen a pay cut since the Great Depression. This is simply unacceptable. It is time for Members of Congress to chip in and do their part to reduce our debt.

The Constitution requires Congress to set its own pay levels, and up through the first half of the 20th Century this was carried out on an as needed basis through legislation passed by both chambers. However, since 1968 Congressional pay raises have been tied to measures of inflation and take place automatically unless Congress acts to block them. In these difficult economic times, it is unacceptable that Members of Congress can automatically receive a raise while Americans continue to struggle.

I have introduced legislation to cut Members of Congress' pay and eliminate these automatic pay raises. The Congressional Halt in Pay Increases (CHIP IN) and Cut Congressional Pay Act, would cut Members of Congress' pay by 10 percent and repeal the automatic pay increases. It is a commonsense proposal that would ensure Members of Congress make a personal contribution to getting our fiscal house in order.

I also believe it is unacceptable that Members of Congress continue to be paid without carrying out one of their main duties – passing a budget each year. Since the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, Congress has been required to approve a budget by April 15th each year. The last time Congress succeeded in passing a budget was in 2009. Hard working lowans do not expect to be paid if they do not fulfill their job requirements and neither should Members of

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Congress.

This is why I was the second person in the House to strongly support the No Budget, No Pay Act in 2011 and am an original cosponsor of similar legislation this year. This bill would withhold the pay of the members of either chamber of Congress that fails to pass a budget by April 15th, thereby holding them accountable for getting their job done. I was pleased to support a similar measure when it passed the House of Representatives with bipartisan support on January 23rd. I am pleased that the Senate has also passed this vital legislation and the President signed it into law on February 4th.

I came here to Washington to fight for hard working lowans. As part of my commitment to you, I will continue to fight to hold Members of Congress accountable and ensure that they are doing the job they were sent to Washington to do. It is time to end the pay system that has prevented any cut in Congressional pay since 1933 – eight decades ago.

Now is the time for action. To show the American people that Congress is serious about restoring fiscal discipline, we have to start somewhere. There is not a better place to start than with Members of Congress' own pocketbooks.

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