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## Walking the Walk: Congress Claims Fiscal Responsibility, Continues to Spend

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In tough economic times political leaders often promise their constituents “fiscal responsibility” and “accountability.” While the intentions of these leaders may be to reduce spending, a recent report by the National Taxpayers Union Foundation (NTUF) has found that the actions of these leaders speak much louder than their words.

According to the recent findings of the NTUF, despite assurances by members of the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress to put an end to increased spending, the trend to spend continued. NTUF examined individual members of Congress and the costs associated with the bills they chose to sponsor or co-sponsor. Since legislative sponsorship is entirely voluntary, the bills (and their associated costs) shed light on the true fiscal intent of the lawmaker. NTUF Senior Policy Analyst Demian Brady summarized the purpose of the report with the question, “What would happen if Congressman X became king tomorrow and all the legislation he sponsored or co-sponsored became law all at once?”

After analyzing over 11,081 pieces of legislation in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress and cost estimates for 2,760 bills, the NTUF found that lawmakers proposed 2,655 bills to increase spending and only 105 to reduce expenditures. In the House of Representative if all spending proposals were enacted spending would increase \$2.23 trillion and bills to reduce expenditures would only offset that increase by 2.5 percent. This astounding total averages to \$19,383 per household. In the Senate, if all spending proposals were enacted the total would reach \$1.5 trillion with only 5.7 percent in spending reduction offsets, resulting in an average cost of \$12,002 per household.

The report also identified specific trends for both Republicans and Democrats. On average Republicans sponsored less expensive legislation, but still proposed overall spending increases. The average House Democrat in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress proposed a net spending total of \$624.7 billion while the average Republican sponsored \$26.7 billion in spending. In the Senate the trend continued with the average Democrat backing a \$193.3 billion increase while Republicans averaged \$124.9 billion in increases. However, it was determined that representatives who belonged to either the Blue Dog Caucus or Republican Study Committee, both of which label themselves as fiscally conservative, proposed more saving and less spending than their fellow representatives.

With statistics such as these it is no wonder that Congressional approval ratings remain so low. In Utah we also face tough financial times as the legislature works to fill an \$850 million budget gap. But, as Congress seems prone to increase spending, Utah has the opportunity to act far more responsibly. Utah legislatures should remember that actions speak louder than words. Talking points that claim a need for “fiscal responsibility” are not enough. Legislators must in fact be fiscally responsibly by reducing spending and forgoing tax increases, thereby reducing the government burden on taxpayer shoulders.