

U.S. Rep. Jo Ann Emerson (MO-08) yesterday evening voted for a House proposal to balance the federal budget and to limit government spending as a first step in authorizing continued payments on federal debt obligations.

"We have to match our spending with our saving," Emerson said. "Every family in the Eighth Congressional District of Missouri has to live by these considerations, and the federal government should, too. We are faced with some difficult choices, but we have to do some commonsense work to put our nation on a responsible path. This government is addicted to debt; we borrow 40 cents on every dollar we spend and we have to break that addiction."

None of the restrictions on spending in the bill apply to Social Security, Medicare, Veterans Benefits and Services, or paying interest on outstanding U.S. debt obligations.

"Even with a balanced budget and spending caps, we must choose priorities. Medicare, Social Security, the promises we've made to our veterans and to our children have to be preserved. Believe me, there is a lot of money that can be saved in federal government without touching the programs we rely on most. Sometimes it requires a creative solution or combining two federal offices, but there are lots of ways to make a difference in the amount of taxpayer money we spend without touching Social Security or Medicare," Emerson said.

Emerson has, in the past, offered legislation which would advance a balanced budget amendment, requiring government expenditures to match revenues. The measure approved last night limits the U.S. Treasury from exercising any new borrowing authority until such an amendment is presented to the states for ratification, with the exceptions for the four areas listed above. The other major portion of the bill approved in the House on Tuesday evening would tie government spending to a specific percentage of U.S. Gross Domestic Product: from 21.7 percent in 2013 down to 19.9 percent in 2021.

"It is important that we honor our nation's financial commitments. Everyone understands that we have taken out a loan and we need to make the payments or suffer the consequences. What we want is to get ourselves out of this situation and free future generations from a burden too great to bear," Emerson said. "That means cutting spending, reducing the size and scope of federal government, ferreting out waste and duplication, and doing more with less."

