

Federal spending is the dominant political discussion in the nation right now, and for very good reason. The fiscal cliff has given us a crucial decision point. We can make a very good choice for the future of our country, or a very bad one – but a choice must be made.

Two years ago, I accepted the chairmanship of an Appropriations Subcommittee charged with funding the operations of some 40 federal entities. Some are big, like the U.S. Treasury. Some are small, like the Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation. But they all cost taxpayers money. Trimming their budgets over the past two years has been a tough, but rewarding job. We made some progress.

But unless these bills become law, the savings achieved in them never become reality. And while conservatives in the House are having some positive influence to end our national spending problem, we are endlessly opposed by liberals in the Senate and the White House who see no good reason to stop the runaway train of record spending, deficits and debt -- which has climbed above 80 percent of U.S. Gross Domestic Product.

Last year, we began to see some positive change. The budget deficit fell by nearly 20 percent from 2011 to 2012. Over the same period of time, a slowly recovering economy put six percent more into the federal treasury without substantially changing tax rates. And total federal spending fell by about \$100 billion – a 1.6 percent drop. The tension in Washington over spending and budgets is beginning to show some results.

However, it is too little progress, too slowly.

Americans are still borrowing 40 cents of every dollar their government spends. In order to change that dangerous trend, we must have a new commitment to reducing spending. We cannot, should not, and must not attempt to tax our way out of this situation. It is of the utmost importance that we reform the spending behavior that has us in this mess to begin with.

Doing so will require an historic agreement from a President who so far has inspired little confidence in those who want to see government get leaner. The same budgetary pressures which apply to millions of American families ought to be felt by bureaucratic offices. Yet there is

a "let them eat cake" mentality in our federal government today, and it needs to change.

By way of example, in the last two years, every office in the legislative branch of government – like the congressional office of the Eighth Congressional District – have absorbed first a five percent and then a 6.4 percent budget cut. I'm proud that our office has served as a model for how every office in government can be asked to do their jobs with a little less. The budgets for administration offices, however, have grown bigger and more bloated during that same time.

The culture of the bureaucracy is not changing because it lacks the leadership to do so. It will not permit any slowing or reduction... the bureaucracy only knows how to grow bigger. And this is a problem. The executive branch of the federal government is approximately 85 times bigger than the legislative branch. This is not the balance our Founders envisioned, and it is not the fiscal accountability taxpayers deserve.