

JOHN F. KERRY
MASSACHUSETTS

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

June 26, 1992

Mr. John E. Flynn
Deputy City Clerk
City Hall
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Dear Mr. Flynn:

Thank you for contacting me to express your opposition to a constitutional amendment mandating a balanced budget. I appreciate your comments on this important matter.

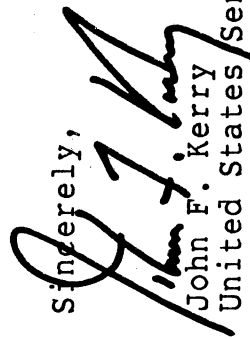
I strongly believe that we must reduce the federal budget deficit in order to avert a serious long-term economic decline in our country. The efforts to date to accomplish this have not been effective, and strong steps must be taken. However, I am concerned that a balanced budget constitutional amendment may be neither an effective, nor a judicious means of accomplishing that goal.

I fear that a constitutional amendment to balance the budget might perversely restrict the government's flexibility in the budget process to deal with unexpected economic crises and changing economic circumstances. Once a constitutional amendment has been ratified, it cannot be amended without initiating the long process of ratification by all 50 states, which can take a decade or longer. In this nation's history, national emergencies, such as World War II, required flexibility in the budget process. Moreover, with economic cycles, natural disasters, and financial problems like the S&L crisis, limiting the government's ability to respond might be destructive.

In the past, Congress has demonstrated the political will to fight the deficit when it passed the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Emergency Deficit Reduction Act, which I supported strongly. Gramm-Rudman-Hollings established deficit reduction targets for each fiscal year, moving eventually towards the goal of a balanced budget. This approach to deficit reduction was abandoned in last year's budget package, which President Bush endorsed, and it was one of the main reasons I voted against the entire package. It is simply not enough to control spending. We must now make the tough decisions that have been put off for a decade and restore this nation's fiscal soundness.

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Thank you again for expressing your views about this important issue. Please do not hesitate to write me about other issues of concern to you.

Sincerely,

John F. Kerry
United States Senator

JFK/hhsr

Consent Comm. # 29

S 588

Comm. from Senator John F. Kerry in acknowledgement to the opposition to a constitutional amendment mandating a balanced budget.

In City Council,

Aug. 3, 1992

Placed on file