

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-3313**

**Testimony to the House Committee on Budget on Issues of Importance**  
**February 27, 2020**  
**Submitted by Congressman Ted Budd**

Chairman Yarmuth, Ranking Member Womack, and members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

As a small business owner and someone who brings an outsider's perspective to Washington, I want to sound the alarm on our country's out of control fiscal situation. Right now, the national debt stands at more than \$23 trillion, which is equivalent to roughly \$70,000 for each man, woman, and child in America. And the budget deficit is set to break \$1 trillion this year.

We have to take action and reverse course. The path we're on is simply unsustainable and risks triggering a financial crisis that would undermine the prosperity of the American people.

That is why I recently introduced a resolution along with fellow members of the North Carolina delegation calling for an end to Washington's spending addiction. My resolution simply states that Congress should not raise the debt ceiling without making

significant fiscal and spending reforms that would put us back on track towards a balanced budget.

More specifically, I recently launched a series called “Budd’s Budget Busters” to highlight examples of government waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement along with common sense solutions that Congress can act on and save taxpayer dollars.

The first instance of government waste I highlighted is the millions of taxpayer dollars being sent to individuals who are not even alive. For example, a 2015 Social Security Administration Inspector General report found 6.5 million people in the system that are implausibly 112 years old. The Department of Veterans Affairs paid out an estimated \$37.7 million to deceased veterans in 2016. Over \$1 billion has been paid to farmers who had been dead for over three years. Medicare paid for \$3.6 million in prescription drugs for dead beneficiaries.

The fact that the federal government is unable to distinguish between the living and the dead is absurd, especially when a simple fix is available. That’s why I applaud my colleague Rep. Gianforte for introducing H.R. 2543, the appropriately named Stopping Improper Payments to Deceased People Act. The bill grants federal agencies access to the Social Security Administration's Death Database, and puts new procedures in

place that force agencies to consider death data before making payments. Passing legislation like this is common sense and a no-brainer.

Another example of government waste that I highlighted was the fact that 75 percent of the federal government's IT funding goes towards maintaining outdated legacy software. For example, the Department of Justice and the Social Security Administration still operate a programming code from the 1950s and 1960s. The Department of the Treasury still uses a pair of nearly 60-year-old systems. The Department of Veterans Affairs maintains veterans' benefits on a more than 50-year-old system. Most incredibly, the Department of Defense uses an over 50-year-old system of 8-inch floppy disks to operate our country's nuclear arsenal.

As the tech revolution continues to impact every aspect of our lives, we have to make sure that our government isn't left in the dust. The private sector can be a vital resource for demonstrating how to effectively modernize using cutting edge tools like Cloud technology. That's why Congress should perform enhanced oversight in the form of hearings and testimony and enact new legislation where it would be needed. Agencies and departments should be held accountable for the snails pace of technological change in the federal bureaucracy.

In the three years I've been here, I've voted against many budgets that ignore our national debt and kick the can further down the road.

I look forward to working with all of you to reverse course and start pursuing policies that will reduce our national debt for our kids and grandkids. The time is now to rein in Washington's spending addiction. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.

I yield back.