

Untitled document

Editorial

*The Laconia Citizen, April 7, 2011*

Reasonable members of Congress are moving toward a compromise that will keep the federal government operating for the last half of the fiscal year.

Rep. Charlie Bass, who represents the state's 2nd Congressional District which includes part of central New Hampshire, is one of those who is using his leverage to work for the kind of spending cuts needed to bring the deficit down on the one hand while ensuring that the federal government can go about its business, which after all is the people's business.

There are those who see it differently. Rigid tea party-backed Republicans are throwing down the gauntlet, saying this is the time to pick a fight. Charlie Bass feels this kind of brinksmanship would do more harm than good.

Bass, for whom today's looming shutdown showdown is déjà vu, explained his reasoning on an interview with NPR's "Weekend Edition Sunday."

"I was here in 1995. I was supportive of the government shutdown. In the end, I think we all discovered that even our allies lost respect for us because we didn't appear to be able to solve problems. I think there's a feeling that shutting down government somehow moves everybody to the edge, and makes people do things and compromise in a better fashion. But we didn't discover that in 1995. And in the end, those of us who supported the government shutdown really lost ground."

The people of this state, like their fellow citizens in the rest of the country, want spending brought under control and the deficit reduced. They want it done effectively and efficiently. But they also want it done fairly, prudently and maturely.

Failing to face up to this overwhelming challenge in a balanced way runs the risk, as Bass so aptly points out, of pushing those in Congress to the edge.

If that happens, it will make the job of tackling the other major fiscal issues coming down the pike to debt ceiling, 11 appropriation bills, and the budget itself that much more difficult to resolve.

Rep Bass is showing real courage for taking this responsible, clear-headed, centrist position and for joining forces with other like-minded members of Congress to resolve this deadlock.