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**By Congressman Charles F. Bass (NH-02)  
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Earlier this month, our national debt reached an astounding \$16 trillion – more than \$5 trillion of which was added in the last four years alone. Our national budget deficit currently stands at more than \$1 trillion. And according to USDebtClock.org, the average debt owed per taxpayer is \$140,414 and counting!

Our nation cannot sustain this crushing debt and deficit much longer. Our credit rating is in jeopardy, our economy is experiencing one of the worst recoveries, and our unemployment rate has remained above 8 percent for more than three years. Our problems are both immediate and long-term, and to do nothing cannot and must not be an option.

Our economy is facing the possibility of being thrown into another recession at the end of this year if Congress and the Administration do not take action to prevent the tax increases and across-the-board spending cuts in defense and other programs that are set to take effect on Jan. 1 as a result of the failure of the Supercommittee. Every family will see a tax increase – an average of \$3,600 per tax return in New Hampshire – and the harmful cuts to defense and other programs will jeopardize more than 3,700 jobs in the Granite State alone if nothing is done to stop the sequester. This is unacceptable and entirely preventable.

A problem of this magnitude can be solved only if members of Congress are willing to come together to find bipartisan solutions that go beyond political posturing. If Congress should fail to act, I recently introduced [bipartisan legislation](#) that will ensure fairness by applying the same reductions to the salaries of Members of Congress, the President, and Vice President that domestic spending programs will face under the sequester. It's time for Washington to get serious and put its money where its mouth is about solving our nation's fiscal challenges.

That's why I am committed to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, having supported the only bipartisan budget plan offered earlier this year that was based on the framework of the Simpson-Bowles Commission to reduce the deficit by \$4 trillion over 10 years through a combination of comprehensive tax reform and responsible spending reductions. The plan would have also eliminated the automatic across-the-board cuts under sequestration.

This plan is more than just numbers on paper – it represents how Members of Congress, with their different principles and ideologies, can come together in the spirit of compromise and find a solution to our nation's problems. It is this type of bipartisan plan that I think needs to be the basis for whatever path Congress and the Administration decide to take as the debate on stopping the fiscal cliff and reducing the deficit continues.

From Colebrook to Salem, the people I have met in New Hampshire have told me countless times that they want Congress to stop fighting and get to work. I couldn't agree more, and it is only through bipartisanship and compromise that we will keep our country from falling back into another recession and get our nation's fiscal house in order for our children and grandchildren.

*Charles F. Bass represents New Hampshire's Second District in Congress and serves on the House Energy and Commerce Committee. You can reach him [here](#) or on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/RepCharlesBass>*