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As a businessman for over 30 years, I know what it means to balance a budget, meet a payroll, and to exercise fiscal discipline that keeps a business moving forward. Giving small businesses the resources they need to create jobs, making sure our government spends no more than what it takes in, and keeping taxes low will ultimately mean greater economic growth and prosperity for everyone.

Unemployment in Florida is at a 16-year high, foreclosures continue to soar, and credit is tight. These are some of the many challenges facing our families and senior citizens in this period of economic uncertainty. What the country truly needs now is a common-sense plan to revive our economy and protect and produce more American jobs in the United States. In order to achieve these goals, there are several key issues that need to be addressed without delay or partisan rancor:

Balanced Budget Amendment

As the national debt rises, already amounting to more than \$14 trillion, one of my top legislative priorities is a Constitutional Amendment to balance the federal budget. My balanced budget bill was the first bill I introduced upon being elected to Congress, and it was also the first bill I reintroduced in the 112th Congress.

Wasteful spending is threatening our future and will unfairly burden our children and

grandchildren with debt that is not their own. A constitutional amendment will force Congress to make the tough choices necessary to balance the budget for taxpayers today and for future generations.

The 111th Congress added more to the national debt than the first 100 Congresses combined. We don't have a revenue problem, we have a spending problem. Each year, billions of taxpayer dollars are spent on waste, fraud, and abuse. A balanced budget amendment would force lawmakers to take a hard look at the programs they are funding and hold federal agencies accountable.

My bill would balance the federal budget by 2016. The balanced budget constitutional amendment bill requires: a 3/5 vote for any increases in the debt, that the President submit a balanced budget to Congress, and that any legislation to increase revenue must be passed by a true majority of each chamber – not just a majority of those present and voting. Exceptions to these provisions are provided in times of military conflicts and natural disasters.

To see video about my balanced budget amendment, [click here](#) and [here](#).

Tax Relief for middle-class working Americans and small businesses

In the 111th Congress, I voted for the "Middle Class Tax Relief Act of 2010" to prevent tax increases in an economic downturn. The legislation, which became law, extended current tax rates for all Americans, preventing what would have been the largest tax increase in the history of the United States. The Wall Street Journal reported that 48% of small businesses would be negatively affected had the current tax rate was not extended.

If we are serious about reducing unemployment and strengthening our economy, we should let people keep more of their own money and help small businesses grow, not punish them with higher taxes. America's greatness comes from its people and their innovation, not more government intrusion.

Retirement Security

Senior citizens and retirees living on their Nest Eggs are particularly vulnerable to the current economic difficulties. Many are worried about the continued viability and long-term solvency of their pensions, IRAs, and 401(k) plans.

Key Federal safety net programs, such as Social Security and Medicare, must be protected and their long-term solvency be ensured to help retirees and seniors in their post-employment years. We need a non-partisan Blue Ribbon Commission to make recommendations about how best to guarantee Social Security and Medicare's long-term future. In the early Reagan Administration, the "Greenspan Commission" helped save Social Security for 30 years. We need a 21st Century version of this to help keep Social Security and Medicare safe for the Baby Boom generation.

Compete in the 21st Century Global Marketplace

95% of the world's consumers live outside of the United States. Opening up foreign markets for U.S. goods and services helps create jobs here at home. The U.S. must continue to negotiate and implement more bi-lateral Free Trade Agreements, which enable domestic exports to grow by opening up new markets for our goods and products abroad. U.S. workers are the best workforce in the world, as long as they compete on a level playing field. We must continue to support Federal job re-training programs to help workers adapt to the changing marketplace of the 21st Century.

The U.S. must also maintain its status as a world leader in education, particularly as the demand for students with strong mathematics and science backgrounds continues to grow. We can remain competitive in the 21st Century only as long as we maintain a strong primary, secondary, and post-secondary education system which produces top-notch students well-suited for the employment needs of a technology-reliant society.

A Balanced, Comprehensive Energy Plan to Break Our Dependence on Foreign Oil

Our energy crisis has been a major drain on our economy. Gas prices are above \$4 per gallon, and still rising. We need a comprehensive, long-term Energy Policy that's makes the U.S. "energy-independent" within ten years. We need to ramp up our production and utilization of renewable energy sources, increase conservation including recycling, bring online new nuclear power plants, and authorize environmentally-safe drilling for oil and gas in the Alaskan wilderness.