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(Original Signature of Member)

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. _____

Raising a question of the privileges of the House.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. PRICE of Georgia submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on _____

RESOLUTION

Raising a question of the privileges of the House.

Whereas on January 20, 2009, Barack Obama was inaugurated as President of the United States, and the outstanding public debt of the United States stood at \$10.627 trillion;

Whereas on January 20, 2009, in the President's Inaugural Address, he stated, "[T]hose of us who manage the public's dollars will be held to account, to spend wisely, reform bad habits, and do our business in the light of day, because only then can we restore the vital trust between a people and their government.";

Whereas on February 17, 2009, the President signed into public law H.R. 1, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009;

Whereas the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 included \$575 billion of new spending and \$212 billion of revenue reductions for a total deficit impact of \$787 billion;

Whereas the borrowing necessary to finance the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 will cost an additional \$300 billion;

Whereas on February 26, 2009, the President unveiled his budget blueprint for FY 2010;

Whereas the President's budget for FY 2010 proposes the eleven highest annual deficits in U.S. history;

Whereas the President's budget for FY 2010 proposes to increase the national debt to \$23.1 trillion by FY 2019, more than doubling it from current levels;

Whereas on March 11, 2009, the President signed into public law H.R. 1105, the Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2009;

Whereas the Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2009 constitutes nine of the twelve appropriations bills for FY 2009 which had not been enacted before the start of the fiscal year;

Whereas the Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2009 spends \$19.1 billion more than the request of President Bush;

Whereas the Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2009 spends \$19.0 billion more than simply extending the continuing resolution for FY 2009;

Whereas on April 1, 2009, the House considered H. Con. Res. 85, Congressional Democrats' budget proposal for FY 2010;

Whereas the Congressional Democrats' budget proposal for FY 2010, H. Con. Res. 85, proposes the six highest annual deficits in U.S. history;

Whereas the Congressional Democrats' budget proposal for FY 2010, H. Con. Res. 85, proposes to increase the national debt to \$17.1 trillion over five years, \$5.3 trillion more than compared to the level on January 20, 2009;

Whereas Congressional Republicans produced an alternative budget proposal for FY 2010 which spends \$4.8 trillion less than the Congressional Democrats' budget over 10 years;

Whereas the Republican Study Committee produced an alternative budget proposal for FY 2010 which improves the budget outlook in every single year, balances the budget by FY 2019, and cuts the national debt by more than \$6 trillion compared to the President's budget;

Whereas on April 20, 2009, attempting to respond to public criticism, the President convened the first cabinet meeting of his Administration and challenged his cabinet to cut a collective \$100 million in the next 90 days;

Whereas the challenge to cut a collective \$100 million represents just 1/40,000 of the Federal budget;

Whereas on June 16, 2009, total outstanding Troubled Asset Relief Program, or TARP, funds to banks stood at \$197.6 billion;

Whereas on June 16, 2009, total outstanding TARP funds to AIG stood at \$69.8 billion;

Whereas on June 16, 2009, total outstanding TARP funds to domestic automotive manufacturers and their finance units stood at \$80 billion;

Whereas on June 19, 2009, the outstanding public debt of the United States was \$11.409 trillion;

Whereas on June 19, 2009, each citizen's share of the outstanding public debt of the United States came to \$37,236.88;

Whereas according to a New York Times/CBS News survey, three-fifths of Americans (60 percent) do not think the President has developed a clear plan for dealing with the current budget deficit (New York Times/CBS News, Conducted June 12-16, 2009, Survey of 895 Adults Nationwide);

Whereas the best means to develop a clear plan for dealing with runaway Federal spending is a real commitment to fiscal restraint and an open and transparent appropriations process in the House of Representatives;

Whereas before assuming control of the House of Representatives in January 2007, Congressional Democrats were committed to an open and transparent appropriations process;

Whereas according to a document by Congressional Democrats entitled "Democratic Declaration: Honest Leadership and Open Government," page 2 states, "Our goal is to restore accountability, honesty and openness at all levels of government.";

Whereas according to a document by Congressional Democrats entitled "A New Direction for America," page 29 states, "Bills should generally come to the floor under a procedure that allows open, full, and fair debate consisting of a full amendment process that grants the Minority the right to offer its alternatives, including a substitute.";

Whereas on November 21, 2006, The San Francisco Chronicle reported, “Speaker Pelosi pledged to restore ‘minority rights’ – including the right of Republicans to offer amendments to bills on the floor. . . The principle of civility and respect for minority participation in this House is something that we promised the American people, she said. ‘It’s the right thing to do.’” (“Pelosi’s All Smiles through a Rough House Transition,” The San Francisco Chronicle, November 21, 2006);

Whereas on December 6, 2006, Speaker Nancy Pelosi stated, “[We] promised the American people that we would have the most honest and open government and we will.”;

Whereas on December 17, 2006, The Washington Post reported, “After a decade of bitter partisanship that has all but crippled efforts to deal with major national problems, Pelosi is determined to try to return the House to what it was in an earlier era – ‘where you debated ideas and listened to each others arguments.’” (“Pelosi’s House Diplomacy,” The Washington Post, December 17, 2006);

Whereas on December 5, 2006, Majority Leader Steny Hoyer stated, “We intend to have a Rules Committee. . .that gives opposition voices and alternative proposals the ability to be heard and considered on the floor of the House.” (“Hoyer Says Dems’ Plans Unruffled by Approps Logjam,” CongressDaily PM, December 5, 2006);

Whereas during debate on June 14, 2005, in the Congressional Record on page H4410, Chairwoman Louise M. Slaughter of the House Rules Committee stated, “If we want to foster democracy in this body, we should take the time and thoughtfulness to debate all major legislation under an open rule, not just appropriations bills, which

are already restricted. An open process should be the norm and not the exception.”;

Whereas since January 2007, there has been a failure to commit to an open and transparent process in the House of Representatives;

Whereas more bills were considered under closed rules, 64 total, in the 110th Congress under Democratic control, than in the previous Congress, 49, under Republican control;

Whereas fewer bills were considered under open rules, 10 total, in the 110th Congress under Democratic control, than in the previous Congress, 22, under Republican control;

Whereas fewer amendments were allowed per bill, 7.68, in the 110th Congress under Democratic control, than in the previous Congress, 9.22, under Republican control;

Whereas the failure to commit to an open and transparent process in order to develop a clear plan for dealing with runaway Federal spending reached its pinnacle in the House’s handling of H.R. 2847, the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2010;

Whereas H.R. 2847, the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2010 contains \$64.4 billion in discretionary spending, 11.6 percent more than enacted in FY 2009;

Whereas on June 11, 2009, the House Rules Committee issued an announcement stating that amendments for H.R. 2847, the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2010 must be pre-printed in the Congressional Record by the close of business on June 15, 2009;

Whereas both Republicans and Democrats filed 127 amendments in the Congressional Record for consideration on the House floor;

Whereas on June 15, 2009, the House Rules Committee reported H. Res. 544, a rule with a pre-printing requirement and unlimited pro forma amendments for purposes of debate;

Whereas on June 16, 2009, the House proceeded with one hour of general debate, or one minute to vet each \$1.07 billion in H.R. 2847, in the Committee of the Whole;

Whereas after one hour of general debate the House proceeded with amendment debate;

Whereas after just 22 minutes of amendment debate, or one minute to vet each \$3.02 billion in H.R. 2847, a motion that the Committee rise was offered by Congressional Democrats;

Whereas the House agreed on a motion that the Committee rise by a recorded vote of 179 Ayes to 124 Noes, with all votes in the affirmative being cast by Democrats;

Whereas afterwards, the House Rules Committee convened a special, untelevised meeting to dispense with further proceedings on H.R. 2847, the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2010;

Whereas on June 17, 2009, the House Rules Committee reported H. Res. 552, a new and restrictive structured rule for H.R. 2847, the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2010;

Whereas every House Republican and 27 House Democrats voted against agreeing on H. Res. 552;

Whereas H. Res. 552 made in order just 23 amendments, with a possibility for 10 more amendments, out of the 127 amendments originally filed;

Whereas H. Res. 552 severely curtailed pro forma amendments for the purposes of debate;

Whereas the actions of Congressional Democrats to curtail debate and the number of amendments offered to H.R. 2847, the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2010 effectively ended the process to deal with runaway Federal spending in a positive and responsible manner;

Whereas Congressional Democrats continue to curtail debate and the number of amendments offered to appropriations bills;

Whereas on June 18, 2009, the House Rules Committee reported H. Res. 559, a restrictive structured rule for H.R. 2918, the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 2010;

Whereas H. Res. 559 made in order just one amendment out of the 20 amendments originally filed;

Whereas on June 23, 2009, the House Rules Committee reported H. Res. 573, a restrictive structured rule for H.R. 2892, the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, 2010;

Whereas H. Res. 573 made in order just 9 amendments, with a possibility for 5 more amendments, out of the 91 amendments originally filed;

Whereas on June 24, 2009, the House Rules Committee reported H. Res. 578, a restrictive structured rule for H.R. 2996, the Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2010;

Whereas H. Res. 578 made in order just 8 amendments, with a possibility for 5 more amendments, out of the 105 amendments originally filed; and

Whereas the actions taken have resulted in indignity being visited upon the House of Representatives: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That—

2 (1) the House of Representatives recommit
3 itself to fiscal restraint and develop a clear plan for
4 dealing with runaway Federal spending;

5 (2) the House of Representatives return to its
6 best traditions of an open and transparent appro-
7 priations process without a pre-printing requirement;
8 and

9 (3) the House Rules Committee shall report out
10 open rules for all general appropriations bills
11 throughout the remainder of the 111th Congress.