

## Compact for a Balanced Budget Written Testimony for the Compact Commission

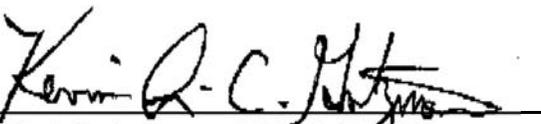
My name is Kevin Gutzman and I am Professor and Chairman of the Department of History at Western Connecticut State University. I am also a member of the Compact for America Educational Foundation Council of Scholars. I received my Master of Public Affairs from the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas, my Juris Doctor from the University of Texas School of Law, and my Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy in American history from the University of Virginia. My area of scholarly expertise is American constitutional and intellectual history. I have published scholarly articles in several of the leading history journals, two best-selling books in constitutional history, and two books on the American Revolution and Early Republic-most recently, James Madison and the Making of America.

I enthusiastically endorse the interstate compact approach to a balanced budget amendment. Not only is this endeavor a moral imperative, but it is entirely in keeping with the Founding Fathers' understanding of the way that American constitutionalism would work.

Presently, the Federal Government's debt tops \$19 trillion. More ominously, estimates of the Federal Government's unfunded obligations range between \$50 trillion and \$222 trillion. While I am more prone to accept the latter figure, I am certain that anything in this range represents coming calamity. Reasonable people on both sides of the aisle recognize the urgency of this issue. Still, Congress seems unable meaningfully to tackle, or even to consider, this problem. James Buchanan's Public Choice Theory, for which he won the Nobel Prize in Economics, tells us that without a change to the system, we can expect the system to continue to produce similar results. In short, if we want an end to the profligacy, we need to amend the Constitution. We need to rein in Congress. Experience has revealed a flaw in our constitutional system, precisely as the Founding Fathers expected it would, and that is why they thought amendment would occasionally be necessary.

Congressional failure to address its own misbehavior is precisely the problem with which George Mason intended to deal when he insisted In the Philadelphia Convention that Article V of the Constitution include a provision enabling the states to initiate the amendment process. An interstate compact is the best mechanism for the states to ensure that the convention they call will address and vote on precisely and only the measure the states have in mind for the convention to adopt. This is entirely In keeping with the explanation of the amendment process given by prominent Federalists during the ratification process in 1788.

In my judgment, passing this measure is a moral imperative. Thank you for hearing me.



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