

Late November 14, 2005 Congress is poised to consider a budget bill this week in a vote both parties consider critical, but in reality the bill is nothing more than a political exercise by congressional leaders designed to convince voters that something is being done about runaway federal spending. Having spent the last five years out-pandering the Democrats by spending money to buy off various voting constituencies, congressional Republicans now find themselves forced to appeal to their unhappy conservative base by applying window dressing to the bloated 2006 federal budget. Ignore the talk about Congress "slashing" vital government programs in this budget bill, which is just nonsense. This Congress couldn't slash spending if the members' lives depended on it. Remember, this is a Congress that has increased spending by 33% since President Bush took office in 2001. And we're not talking about national defense or anti-terrorism spending. We're talking about a one-third increase in garden variety domestic spending. This is also a Congress that passed the 2003 Medicare prescription drug bill, the single largest increase in entitlement spending since the Great Society programs of the 1960s. So there's not much credibility to be found on Capitol Hill when it comes to reducing the federal budget. The proposed bill calls for such tiny reductions in spending that frankly it's shameful for Republicans to claim it represents a victory for fiscal conservatism. And it's equally preposterous for Democrats to claim it represents some great threat to precious entitlements. The dollar amounts contained in the bill are so insignificant that both parties are guilty of meaningless grandstanding. The budget reconciliation bill reduces spending by a mere \$5.6 billion in a 2006 budget of nearly \$2.5 trillion. This represents just a fraction of one percent, a laughable amount. Does anyone seriously believe the federal budget cannot be trimmed more than this? Consider that the federal budget was only about \$1 trillion in 1990, a mere 15 years ago- and government was far too large and too intrusive then. After all the talk about deficit spending, this is the best a Republican congress and Republican president can come up with? What a farce. Projections of big savings beyond 2006 because of this bill are pure fiction. Congress has no authority to pass budgets or appropriate money beyond the next fiscal year. Future Congresses will not pay one whit of attention to this bill, and its hopeful predictions will be forgotten. Furthermore, we need to get our budget cutting priorities in order. Why are we cutting domestic programs while we continue to spend billions on infrastructure in Iraq? In just the past two weeks Congress approved a \$21 billion foreign aid bill and a \$130 million scheme to provide water for developing nations. Why in the world aren't these boondoggles cut first? The spending culture in Washington creates an attitude that government can solve every problem both at home and abroad simply by funding another program. But we've reached a tipping point, with \$8 trillion in debt and looming Social Security and Medicare crises. Government spending has become a national security issue, because unless Congress stops the bleeding the resulting economic downturn will cause us more harm than any terrorist group could ever hope to cause. And we're doing it to ourselves, from within. Congress is running out of options in its game of buy now, pay later. Foreign central banks are less interested in loaning us money. Treasury printing presses are worn out from the unprecedented increase in dollars ordered by the Federal Reserve Bank over the past 15 years. Taxpayers are tapped out. Where will the money for Big Government conservatism come from? Congressional Republicans and Democrats can posture until doomsday, but the needed course of action is clear. Declare an across-the-board ten percent cut for the federal 2006 budget, and focus spending on domestic priorities. If congressional leaders cannot take this simple step toward balancing the 2006 budget, they should at least not

attempt to delude the American people that serious spending cuts are being made.