

The National Debt


The national debt is a topic that I hear about wherever I go across Wisconsin. This is a topic that has a lot of attention, and for me personally, I watch it because of my work with families and financial literacy. Debt cripples opportunity for our nation and it is the same across the kitchen table. The national debt seems to be a political hot potato that gets tossed back and forth, with both sides of the aisle pointing fingers of blame, and with the truth being lost in the mix. Before we dig in too deep, we should acknowledge that the last time the United States had our national debt paid off, Andrew Jackson was the seventh President of the United States, Michigan had just become our 26th state (Wisconsin was still eleven years away!) and it was still nearly a quarter century before the start of the Civil War. The year was 1837, nearly two hundred years ago!

The deficit and national debt are not the same thing. I have heard people talk about these two topics as though they are interchangeable. The deficit is the amount the budget is short, whereas the debt is the cumulative amount the federal government has borrowed over the years since 1837. Deficit adds to our national debt. Our national debt is the total amount of the United States' annual budget deficit, minus any surpluses. Many things may add to the debt such as costly disasters, recent programs to provide aid during the pandemic, costly war, not as much revenue collected as was projected, really, any spending that wasn't planned, or tax breaks that are not considered when balancing the budget.

If we take an honest look at debt and deficits, both parties have contributed to both deficits and national debt. If you hear anything besides this, someone is misrepresenting the truth to you. It simply comes down to priorities and whose priorities you align with. Joe Biden is the 46th President of the United States, which means that thirty-seven presidencies have contributed to our debt. The other overlooked fact is that spending bills begin in the House of Representatives, meaning that much of this massive debt began in the people's House, with bills voted on by nearly two hundred years of elected men and women we have sent to Washington D.C.

So, in politics, the game becomes which President or party has contributed the most debt to our national debt. According to the USA Today report from June 10, 2023, we find the following data (I only went back to when the debt crossed the trillion-dollar threshold): The annual deficit under Reagan tripled and the national debt went from \$995 billion to \$2.9 trillion. Bush senior saw \$1.5 trillion in his presidency. Clinton saw \$1.4 trillion in his time in office. George W. Bush saw the war on terror and tax cuts that increased the debt by \$6.1 trillion. Obama saw an increase of \$8.34 trillion, and Trump was just behind him with \$8.2 trillion. As of June, Biden's debt increase was at \$1.84 trillion, bringing the total debt to roughly \$34 trillion as of this writing. Interestingly enough, only two Presidents have reduced the debt, Calvin Coolidge (1923-1929) with a reduction of \$5.42 billion, and Warren Harding (1921-1923) with a reduction of \$1.63 billion.

Why do I write about this issue? Like I mentioned earlier, financial health is my passion, and as I sit with families, I listen to their story and work with them to become financially literate and to begin good money habits. Our nation needs to begin good money habits, and this will be a central commitment to you as I move forward with my campaign. Sometimes difficult decisions need to be made, and I pledge to you: first I will read every bill that comes across my desk. Second, I will vote for budgets and appropriations that are best for the economic health of our nation. Lastly, we have commitments to many in our nation, and our fiscal policy must be to strengthen our nation and to fulfill the promises we have made. Our nation's word, our credit, and our economic health is far too important to play political games with. I will represent you every day in Washington with your family in the front of my thoughts. Please join me at staceyforwisconsin.com and let's work together to reclaim your voice in DC.

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