



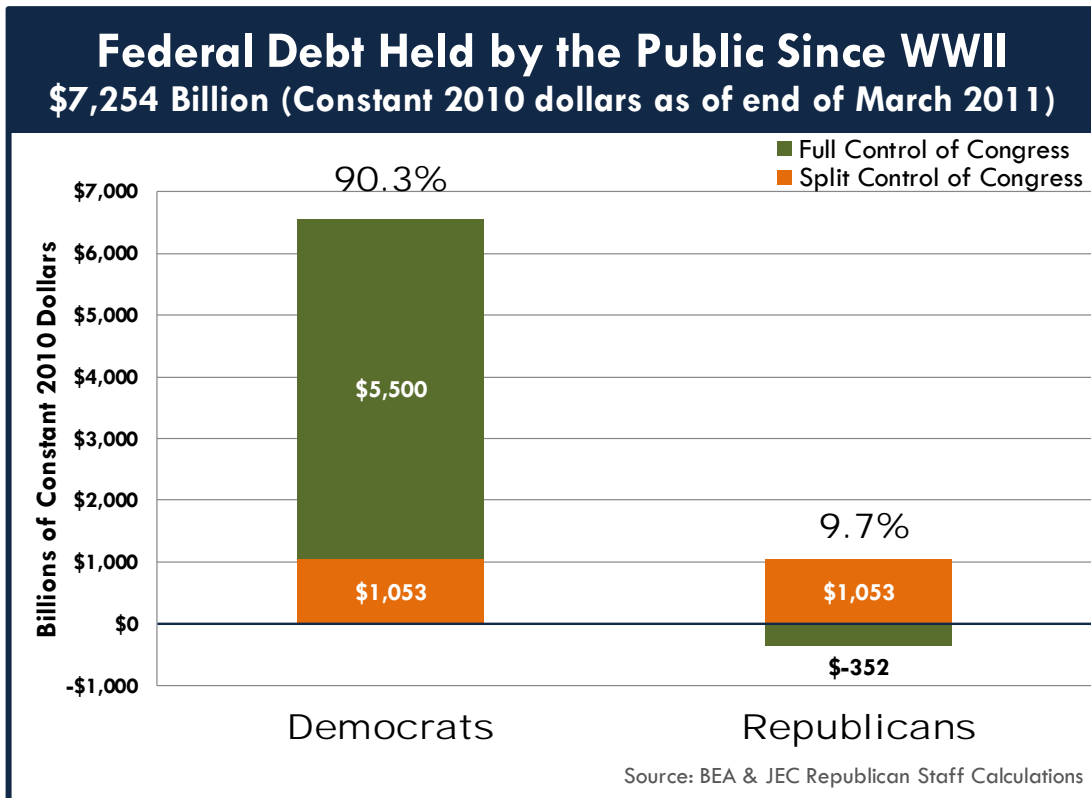
# Joint Economic Committee

## *Republicans*

Representative Kevin Brady  
Vice Chairman

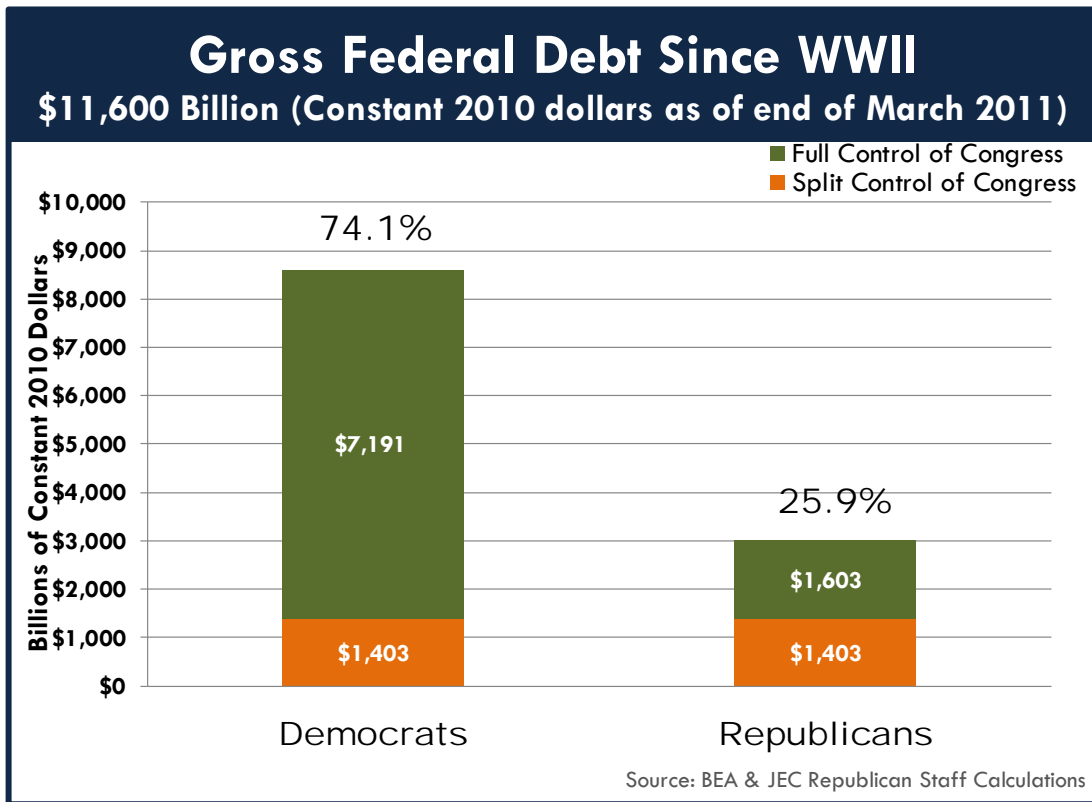
REPUBLICAN STAFF COMMENTARY

## Who Ran Up America's Debt?



**Congress holds the purse strings.** Since the end of World War II in 1945, Democrats have been responsible for about 90 percent of the increase – \$7.3 trillion in today's dollars – in federal debt held by the public. Republicans have been responsible for about 10 percent of the increase. Federal debt held by the public is owed to individuals, firms, foreign governments, and the Federal Reserve. Republican control of Congress produced two periods of federal budget surplus (fiscal years 1948-1949 and 1998-2001) for a net reduction of federal debt held by the public since World War II of \$352 billion in today's dollars.

**Apples-to-apples.** This Republican Staff Commentary uses constant 2010 dollars to ensure a dollar of debt incurred in the past is compared equally with a dollar of debt today. The change in federal debt during a fiscal year was attributed to the party that controlled Congress at the beginning of that fiscal year. When partisan control of Congress was split, one-half of the change in federal debt during a fiscal year was attributed to each party. This analysis covers the period from July 1, 1945 (the beginning of fiscal year 1946) to March 31, 2011 (the middle of fiscal year 2011).



**Gross federal debt.** The U.S. debt ceiling limit applies to gross federal debt, which includes both (1) federal debt held by the public, and (2) federal debt held in “intra-governmental” accounts. Federal debt held in intra-governmental accounts is owed primarily to the Social Security and Medicare Trust Funds. A breakdown of gross federal debt incurred since World War II – \$11.6 billion in today’s dollars – shows that Democrats have been responsible for about 74 percent and Republicans for about 26 percent.

Federal Debt Held by the Public (\$ Billions 2010)						
		Nominal		Real		
<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Control of Congress</u>	<u>PH Federal Debt</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>GDP Price Index</u>	<u>PH Federal Debt (2010)</u>	<u>Change (2010)</u>
1945	D	\$235.2		0.100	\$2,348.2	
1946	D	\$241.9	\$6.7	0.112	\$2,158.7	-\$189.4
1947	D	\$224.3	-\$17.6	0.124	\$1,806.1	-\$352.7
1948	R	\$216.3	-\$8.0	0.131	\$1,649.1	-\$156.9
1949	R	\$214.3	-\$2.0	0.131	\$1,637.0	-\$12.1
1950	D	\$219.0	\$4.7	0.132	\$1,654.9	\$17.9
1951	D	\$214.3	-\$4.7	0.142	\$1,510.7	-\$144.2
1952	D	\$214.8	\$0.5	0.144	\$1,488.6	-\$22.1
1953	D	\$218.4	\$3.6	0.146	\$1,495.4	\$6.9
1954	R	\$224.5	\$6.1	0.147	\$1,523.4	\$27.9
1955	R	\$226.6	\$2.1	0.150	\$1,511.7	-\$11.6
1956	D	\$222.2	-\$4.4	0.155	\$1,433.2	-\$78.5
1957	D	\$219.3	-\$2.9	0.160	\$1,369.0	-\$64.2
1958	D	\$226.3	\$7.0	0.164	\$1,381.7	\$12.7
1959	D	\$234.7	\$8.4	0.166	\$1,416.1	\$34.4
1960	D	\$236.8	\$2.1	0.168	\$1,409.1	-\$7.0
1961	D	\$238.4	\$1.6	0.170	\$1,402.9	-\$6.2
1962	D	\$248.0	\$9.6	0.172	\$1,439.7	\$36.8
1963	D	\$254.0	\$6.0	0.174	\$1,459.0	\$19.3
1964	D	\$256.8	\$2.8	0.177	\$1,452.6	-\$6.4
1965	D	\$260.8	\$4.0	0.180	\$1,448.9	-\$3.7
1966	D	\$263.7	\$2.9	0.185	\$1,424.6	-\$24.3
1967	D	\$266.6	\$2.9	0.191	\$1,397.2	-\$27.4
1968	D	\$289.5	\$22.9	0.199	\$1,455.4	\$58.2
1969	D	\$278.1	-\$11.4	0.209	\$1,332.3	-\$123.1
1970	D	\$283.2	\$5.1	0.220	\$1,288.8	-\$43.5
1971	D	\$303.0	\$19.8	0.231	\$1,313.2	\$24.4
1972	D	\$322.4	\$19.4	0.241	\$1,339.5	\$26.3
1973	D	\$340.9	\$18.5	0.254	\$1,341.9	\$2.4
1974	D	\$343.7	\$2.8	0.277	\$1,240.3	-\$101.6
1975	D	\$394.7	\$51.0	0.303	\$1,301.3	\$61.0
1976 + TQ	D	\$477.4	\$82.7	0.321	\$1,488.6	\$187.2
1977	D	\$549.1	\$71.7	0.341	\$1,609.6	\$121.0
1978	D	\$607.1	\$58.0	0.365	\$1,662.9	\$53.3
1979	D	\$640.3	\$33.2	0.395	\$1,619.1	-\$43.8
1980	D	\$711.9	\$71.6	0.432	\$1,649.8	\$30.6
1981	D	\$789.4	\$77.5	0.472	\$1,672.7	\$22.9
1982	S	\$924.6	\$135.2	0.501	\$1,846.4	\$173.8
1983	S	\$1,137.3	\$212.7	0.521	\$2,184.8	\$338.4
1984	S	\$1,307.0	\$169.7	0.540	\$2,420.0	\$235.1
1985	S	\$1,507.3	\$200.3	0.556	\$2,708.8	\$288.8

1986	S	\$1,740.6	\$233.3	0.569	\$3,060.4	\$351.6
1987	S	\$1,889.8	\$149.2	0.585	\$3,229.0	\$168.6
1988	D	\$2,051.6	\$161.8	0.605	\$3,389.1	\$160.1
1989	D	\$2,190.7	\$139.1	0.628	\$3,487.2	\$98.1
1990	D	\$2,411.6	\$220.9	0.652	\$3,696.1	\$209.0
1991	D	\$2,689.0	\$277.4	0.676	\$3,980.2	\$284.1
1992	D	\$2,999.7	\$310.7	0.692	\$4,337.3	\$357.0
1993	D	\$3,248.4	\$248.7	0.707	\$4,595.3	\$258.1
1994	D	\$3,433.1	\$184.7	0.722	\$4,756.4	\$161.1
1995	D	\$3,604.4	\$171.3	0.737	\$4,891.8	\$135.4
1996	R	\$3,734.1	\$129.7	0.751	\$4,973.2	\$81.4
1997	R	\$3,772.3	\$38.2	0.764	\$4,936.9	-\$36.3
1998	R	\$3,721.1	-\$51.2	0.773	\$4,815.4	-\$121.5
1999	R	\$3,632.4	-\$88.7	0.784	\$4,632.6	-\$182.9
2000	R	\$3,409.8	-\$222.6	0.801	\$4,256.5	-\$376.1
2001	R	\$3,319.6	-\$90.2	0.819	\$4,052.3	-\$204.2
2002	S	\$3,540.4	\$220.8	0.832	\$4,253.0	\$200.7
2003	S	\$3,913.4	\$373.0	0.850	\$4,602.1	\$349.1
2004	R	\$4,295.5	\$382.1	0.874	\$4,912.0	\$310.0
2005	R	\$4,592.2	\$296.7	0.904	\$5,081.7	\$169.7
2006	R	\$4,829.0	\$236.8	0.933	\$5,175.2	\$93.5
2007	R	\$5,035.1	\$206.1	0.961	\$5,241.8	\$66.6
2008	D	\$5,803.1	\$768.0	0.982	\$5,912.1	\$670.3
2009	D	\$7,545.0	\$1,741.9	0.991	\$7,616.9	\$1,704.8
2010	D	\$9,390.5	\$1,845.5	1.000	\$9,390.5	\$1,773.6
2011 (1/2)	D	\$9,651.7	\$261.2	1.005	\$9,602.2	\$211.7

<b>Federal Debt Held by the Public Since WWII in (\$ Billions 2010)</b>			
<b><u>Democratic Control</u></b>	<b><u>Republican Control</u></b>	<b><u>Split Control</u></b>	<b><u>Total</u></b>
\$5,500.4	-\$352.5	\$2,106.1	\$7,254.0

**Note:** Prior to fiscal year 1977, fiscal years ran from July 1 to June 30. The change in federal debt held by the public during the transition quarter (July 1, 1976 to September 30, 1976) is included with the change in federal debt held by the public during fiscal year 1976.

Gross Federal Debt Calculations (\$ Billions 2010)						
		Nominal		Real		
<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Control of Congress</u>	<u>Gross Debt</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>GDP Price Index</u>	<u>Gross Debt (2010)</u>	<u>Change (2010)</u>
1945	D	\$260.1		0.100	\$2,596.8	
1946	D	\$271.0	\$10.9	0.112	\$2,418.4	-\$178.3
1947	D	\$257.1	-\$13.9	0.124	\$2,070.2	-\$348.3
1948	R	\$252.0	-\$5.1	0.131	\$1,921.3	-\$148.9
1949	R	\$252.6	\$0.6	0.131	\$1,929.6	\$8.3
1950	D	\$256.9	\$4.3	0.132	\$1,941.3	\$11.7
1951	D	\$255.3	-\$1.6	0.142	\$1,799.7	-\$141.6
1952	D	\$259.1	\$3.8	0.144	\$1,795.6	-\$4.1
1953	D	\$266.0	\$6.9	0.146	\$1,821.4	\$25.8
1954	R	\$270.8	\$4.8	0.147	\$1,837.5	\$16.2
1955	R	\$274.4	\$3.6	0.150	\$1,830.6	-\$6.9
1956	D	\$272.7	-\$1.7	0.155	\$1,759.0	-\$71.7
1957	D	\$272.3	-\$0.4	0.160	\$1,699.9	-\$59.1
1958	D	\$279.7	\$7.4	0.164	\$1,707.8	\$7.9
1959	D	\$287.5	\$7.8	0.166	\$1,734.7	\$27.0
1960	D	\$290.5	\$3.0	0.168	\$1,728.7	-\$6.0
1961	D	\$292.6	\$2.1	0.170	\$1,721.8	-\$6.9
1962	D	\$302.9	\$10.3	0.172	\$1,758.4	\$36.6
1963	D	\$310.3	\$7.4	0.174	\$1,782.4	\$24.0
1964	D	\$316.1	\$5.8	0.177	\$1,788.0	\$5.7
1965	D	\$322.3	\$6.2	0.180	\$1,790.5	\$2.5
1966	D	\$328.5	\$6.2	0.185	\$1,774.6	-\$15.9
1967	D	\$340.4	\$11.9	0.191	\$1,784.0	\$9.3
1968	D	\$368.7	\$28.3	0.199	\$1,853.5	\$69.6
1969	D	\$365.8	-\$2.9	0.209	\$1,752.4	-\$101.1
1970	D	\$380.9	\$15.1	0.220	\$1,733.4	-\$19.1
1971	D	\$408.2	\$27.3	0.231	\$1,769.1	\$35.8
1972	D	\$435.9	\$27.7	0.241	\$1,811.1	\$42.0
1973	D	\$466.3	\$30.4	0.254	\$1,835.5	\$24.4
1974	D	\$483.9	\$17.6	0.277	\$1,746.3	-\$89.2
1975	D	\$541.9	\$58.0	0.303	\$1,786.7	\$40.4
1976 + TQ	D	\$629.0	\$87.1	0.321	\$1,961.3	\$174.6
1977	D	\$706.4	\$77.4	0.341	\$2,070.7	\$109.4
1978	D	\$776.6	\$70.2	0.365	\$2,127.2	\$56.5
1979	D	\$829.5	\$52.9	0.395	\$2,097.6	-\$29.6
1980	D	\$909.0	\$79.5	0.432	\$2,106.5	\$9.0
1981	D	\$994.8	\$85.8	0.472	\$2,107.9	\$1.3
1982	S	\$1,137.3	\$142.5	0.501	\$2,271.2	\$163.3
1983	S	\$1,371.7	\$234.4	0.521	\$2,635.1	\$363.9
1984	S	\$1,564.6	\$192.9	0.540	\$2,896.9	\$261.8
1985	S	\$1,817.4	\$252.8	0.556	\$3,266.1	\$369.2

1986	S	\$2,120.5	\$303.1	0.569	\$3,728.4	\$462.3
1987	S	\$2,346.0	\$225.5	0.585	\$4,008.5	\$280.1
1988	D	\$2,601.1	\$255.1	0.605	\$4,296.8	\$288.3
1989	D	\$2,867.8	\$266.7	0.628	\$4,565.0	\$268.2
1990	D	\$3,206.3	\$338.5	0.652	\$4,914.1	\$349.2
1991	D	\$3,598.2	\$391.9	0.676	\$5,326.0	\$411.9
1992	D	\$4,001.8	\$403.6	0.692	\$5,786.2	\$460.2
1993	D	\$4,351.0	\$349.2	0.707	\$6,155.1	\$368.9
1994	D	\$4,643.3	\$292.3	0.722	\$6,433.1	\$278.0
1995	D	\$4,920.6	\$277.3	0.737	\$6,678.1	\$245.1
1996	R	\$5,181.5	\$260.9	0.751	\$6,900.9	\$222.7
1997	R	\$5,369.2	\$187.7	0.764	\$7,026.8	\$125.9
1998	R	\$5,478.2	\$109.0	0.773	\$7,089.3	\$62.5
1999	R	\$5,605.5	\$127.3	0.784	\$7,148.9	\$59.6
2000	R	\$5,628.7	\$23.2	0.801	\$7,026.4	-\$122.6
2001	R	\$5,769.9	\$141.2	0.819	\$7,043.5	\$17.1
2002	S	\$6,198.4	\$428.5	0.832	\$7,446.0	\$402.5
2003	S	\$6,760.0	\$561.6	0.850	\$7,949.6	\$503.6
2004	R	\$7,354.7	\$594.7	0.874	\$8,410.3	\$460.7
2005	R	\$7,905.3	\$550.6	0.904	\$8,747.9	\$337.6
2006	R	\$8,451.4	\$546.1	0.933	\$9,057.2	\$309.3
2007	R	\$8,950.7	\$499.3	0.961	\$9,318.1	\$260.8
2008	D	\$9,986.1	\$1,035.4	0.982	\$10,173.7	\$855.6
2009	D	\$11,875.9	\$1,889.8	0.991	\$11,989.0	\$1,815.4
2010	D	\$14,025.5	\$2,149.6	1.000	\$14,025.5	\$2,036.5
2011 (1/2)	D	\$14,270.1	\$244.6	1.005	\$14,196.9	\$171.4

<b>Gross Federal Debt Since WW II (\$ Billions 2010)</b>			
<b><u>Democratic Control</u></b>	<b><u>Republican Control</u></b>	<b><u>Split Control</u></b>	<b><u>Total</u></b>
\$7,190.9	\$1,602.6	\$2,806.7	\$11,600.1

**Note:** Prior to fiscal year 1977, fiscal years ran from July 1 to June 30. The change in gross federal debt during the transition quarter (July 1, 1976 to September 30, 1976) is included with the change in gross federal debt during fiscal year 1976.