

EDITORIALS

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Monthly federal deficits exceed proposed cuts

In February, the federal government overspent its revenues by \$223 billion, a record amount for any month. The February figure is part of what is

expected to be a \$1.5 trillion deficit this year.

Balancing the federal budget is a national security measure. The nation cannot be free if it is beholden to another nation's willingness to lend it money to pay its bills next month.

So what are Americans getting from their employees in Congress?

Republicans proposed a measly \$61 billion in cuts. At that rate of \$61 billion cuts every year, it would take 25 years to eliminate the budget deficit.

Amazingly enough, Democrats are opposed. The Democratic Party proposal is for a \$6 billion cut this year.

Congress borrowed more than that every day in February.

This is nonsense, and good for Sen. Joe Manchin for saying so. He gained national headlines and attention by blasting both sides and the president.

"Why are we doing all this when the most powerful person in these negotiations -- our president -- has failed to lead this debate or offer a serious proposal for spending and cuts that he would be willing to fight for?" Manchin asked on the Senate floor.

Manchin brings to Washington a governor who repeatedly received A's from the conservative Cato Institute for his handling of the state budget.

Indeed, in those 50 laboratories of democracy known as "states," governors of all political stripes are making the tough decisions necessary to balance their budgets.

It is the president's turn.

The federal deficit is now 40 percent of the budget. Congress would have to cut each program by 40 percent to balance the budget next year. It's unrealistic to expect Congress to do that.

But the cutting must begin somewhere. Congress should quickly agree to the easy cuts.

A General Accountability Office report found that there are dozens of redundant federal programs. For example, 15 different agencies regulate food safety. Congress must pare that down to one agency. That is all we can afford now.

The voters had their say in November. They have had enough of deficit spending.

Politicians in Washington ignore that message at their peril.

