

Sen. Risch bashes Obama's debt rhetoric at state GOP meeting in Moscow

By Holly Bowen Daily News Staff Writer

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Idaho's junior U.S. senator lashed out Saturday against President Barack Obama's handling of the current national debt crisis, saying nothing should be off the table when it comes to spending cuts.

Sen. Jim Risch's comments came during a lunchtime speech to fellow Republicans attending a state party meeting in Moscow.

"This is a really difficult message I'm delivering here," said Risch, prefacing his remarks. "It's not a fun message to deliver, but I really don't feel I'd be telling you the truth if I didn't lay the cards on the table."

He said the United States is creating about \$4.5 billion of new debt each day and borrows 40 cents for every dollar it spends.

"The entire budget of the state of Idaho is \$2.5 billion," he said. "That is 12 hours of new debt for the federal government."

He said the nation wouldn't be in such dire fiscal shape if the U.S. government was required to balance its annual budget just like Idaho and many other states. That would require an amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Risch said he's confident Obama will lose his 2012 re-election bid if the nation's debt situation doesn't turn around soon.

"Barack Obama is to good government (as) Casey Anthony is to a good mother," he quipped, referring to the Florida woman recently acquitted of murdering her young daughter. The joke elicited laughter and applause from GOP officials.

Risch said the country's debt ceiling isn't a "cliff moment" and that the president is simply trying to put pressure on Republicans when he says military paychecks and Social Security payments could dry up if the current \$14.3 trillion debt ceiling isn't raised by Aug. 2.

"Even for him, it would be a difficult exercise to throw the United States into default," Risch said.

He said the country's existence currently depends on the willingness of other countries and wealthy individuals and organizations to buy up U.S. debt.

"Every financial center in the world ... anyone who has cash and a substantial amount of it says, 'Where can I put this where there is a 100 percent chance that it will be paid back?' " he said. "There is only one place you can do that, and it's the United States government."

He said that's because the federal government ends up borrowing more money to pay off what it's already borrowed from others.

Risch said the solution is to cut spending, including the defense budget, rather than raise revenue. In addition to slashing spending and balancing the federal budget, he proposed limiting the percentage of gross domestic product the federal government can spend.

He asked if Americans would rather have a government that protects them and encourages free market enterprise, or a European-style "nanny government" that "pays for every baby and funeral" and where everyone "takes all of August off" work.

"Not on my watch," he said.

Risch said there is a "light at the end of the tunnel" and that the nation's problems are better solved through the free market than through government.

Holly Bowen can be reached at (208) 882-5561, ext. 239, or by email to hbowen@dnews.com. Follow her on Twitter: [@DailyNewsHolly](https://twitter.com/DailyNewsHolly)