As Washington continues to bicker over how best to balance the budget, I wanted to tell you about two events I recently held in the district to highlight just how important it is that we get our nation's finances back in order. These events – held in Augusta and Statesboro – gave folks the opportunity to try their hand at balancing the nation's budget by making the same policy decisions facing lawmakers today.

Participants reviewed our nation's current spending and proposed ways to cut costs, improve efficiency, and boost our revenue. They walked through exactly how each proposal would affect our country's bottom line, along with how their ideas would affect programs that folks in our community rely on, like aid to farmers, small businesses, seniors, and students.

Tough choices had to be made. Did your friends and neighbors recommend raising taxes to close our expanding deficit? Or did they save money by reducing entitlement programs that millions of Americans rely on every day?

The result was a greater appreciation of the true sources of the problem, the true size of the problem, and the tough choices necessary to address the problem. I'm heartened that so many of you came out to participate, and had such complimentary things to say at the end of the program.

In fact, the Augusta Chronicle – which participated in the exercise – said that the program "demonstrates quite clearly that we won't be able to balance the books unless we're willing to completely rethink what we depend on the government for -- and accept the painful consequences."

That's true. If we're going to improve our nation's fiscal health, every option needs to be on the table, and everyone needs to be prepared to share in the sacrifice.

The Chronicle also had this to say: "Financially, practically and morally, we have no choice." I couldn't agree more. We simply can't keep kicking this responsibility down the road and saddling future generations with mounds of debt. That's why I'm working hard in Washington to get Republicans and Democrats to put aside their differences and come together to make the

tough choices the American people are counting on us to make.

These were just two of the events I held during the last Congressional recess. Working with members of our community, I also hosted:

- **Two Tax Assistance Clinics** so folks could get free help preparing their 2010 federal tax returns and learn about new tax credits they may be eligible for.

- **A Jobs Fair in Augusta** that paired job seekers with local employers looking to hire. More than 300 folks came out to meet with area businesses and see if their skills could be of use to our local employers.

- **Four Congress on the Corner Meetings**, which gave me an opportunity to hear directly from you how things are going in your lives and what you think Washington can do better.

I have a lot more planned for folks in our district this year, and future events will always be advertised on my website, www.barrow.house.gov . I hope to see you at one of these events, but if you can't make it out to one and you want to reach me, I hope you'll call my office toll free at 866-890-6236.

Sincerely,

John