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What would Ben do?

Online Oreos send Congress a message

With “Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is” at PrioritiesNH.org, citizens build their own federal budgets by stacking Oreo cookies

www.prioritiesnh.org

CONCORD, N.H. - As thousands of New Hampshire taxpayers put the finishing touches on their federal tax returns, a New Hampshire organization is encouraging them to ask “What would Ben do?”

Ben is Ben Cohen, president of Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities (and co-founder of Ben & Jerry’s Ice Cream). His animated image is the star of an award-winning Web video that demonstrates the federal discretionary budget using stacks of Oreo cookies. The video can be viewed on the PrioritiesNH Website at <http://www.prioritiesnh.org/oreos/>.

Now Cohen’s PrioritiesNH campaign is letting the rest of us play. PrioritiesNH has posted a “Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is” game on its Web site at: <http://www.prioritiesnh.org/oreos/ustack/>. The game allows users to do what Ben does: Shift Oreo cookies along a bar chart of the federal discretionary budget, with each cookie representing \$10 billion in spending. After building their ideal budget, players click to the next page, which allows them to send their budget vision and a personal note to their Senators and Congressperson.

It’s a fun game with a serious purpose, says PrioritiesNH director Steve Varnum. “We believe that the federal budget, which is paid for with the taxes of the American people, should reflect the priorities of the American people,” he said. That is certainly not the case now, he said, when half of the discretionary budget goes to a Pentagon bureaucracy that is both wasteful and unaccountable.

PrioritiesNH is a nonprofit, non-partisan project that educates New Hampshire citizens about how their federal tax dollars are spent and engages them in making change. Its Common Sense Budget Act (HR 1702), a measure that cuts \$60 billion in Pentagon waste and reallocates the savings to health care for returning veterans, public schools, health insurance for children, job training, energy independence, deficit reduction and humanitarian aid, was introduced in Congress last week.

The Pentagon budget cuts contained in HR 1702 were identified by Dr. Lawrence J. Korb, assistant defense secretary under Ronald Reagan, with a panel of distinguished military experts. Korb’s detailed report identifies \$60 billion that could be trimmed from the defense budget without hurting America’s ability to fight the Iraq War or defend against extremists. It is available on the PrioritiesNH Web site at http://www.prioritiesnh.org/documents/Korb_revised_06.pdf.

“Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is” will be available online through April 23, 2007.

