



Jesse Helms

U.S. Senator, North Carolina (R)

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Congressional Scorecard 107-1: 50%

Based on the Principles of the U.S. Constitution

✓ Constitutional	✗ Unconstitutional	— Did not Vote	Vote
1. Constitutional Amendment to Allow Federal Regulation of Political Speech: Would adopt a constitutional amendment to give Congress "power to set reasonable limits" on federal campaign contributions and expenditures.			✓
Constitutional: No · Cast: No · S.J.Res. 4 · 03/26/2001			
2. Gun Buyback Programs: To make available \$15 million for "gun buyback initiatives."			✓
Constitutional: Yes · Cast: Yes · S.Amdt. 1231 to S.Amdt. 1214 to H.R. 2620 · 08/02/2001			
3. Anti-Terrorism Authority: Would create the "USA Patriot Act," giving law enforcement and intelligence agencies vast new powers to combat terrorism.			✗
Constitutional: No · Cast: Yes · On Passage of the Bill H.R. 3162 · 10/25/2001			
4. Education: Would, as the "No Child Left Behind Act," overhaul education proposals to increase school accountability and reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) for six years.			—
Estimated Cost per household: -\$1,248.00/year.			
Constitutional: No · Cast: None · On the Conference Report H.R. 1 · 12/18/2001			
5. Debt Limit Increase: Would increase the public debt limit by \$450 billion for a new ceiling of \$6.4 trillion.			—
Estimated Cost per household: -\$4,117.00/year.			
Constitutional: No · Cast: None · S. 2578 · 06/11/2002			
6. War Authorization Against Iraq: Authorizes the use of U.S. military force against Iraq, including to enforce any related UN Security Council resolutions.			✗
Constitutional: No · Cast: Yes · H.J.Res. 114 · 10/11/2002			



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\$297,530

U.S. National Debt Per Household as of August 28, 2026

Why do these votes matter?

1. Constitutional Amendment to Allow Federal Regulation of Political Speech

This vote was on the adoption of a constitutional amendment to give Congress "power to set reasonable limits on the amount of contributions that may be accepted by, and the amount of expenditures that may be made by, in support of, or in opposition to, a candidate for nomination for election to, or for election to, Federal office."

The amendment is an outright attack on the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Senator Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) explained that "the Hollings constitutional amendment [sums] up the reformers' agenda for the past quarter century as they have sought to root out of American political life any speech or activity which could conceivably affect an election or be of value to a politician."

2. Gun Buyback Programs

Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) offered an amendment to make available \$15 million from the Housing Drug Elimination Program section of the VA-HUD appropriations bill "for the BuyBack America program, enabling gun buyback initiatives undertaken by public housing authorities and their local police departments."

Federally-funded gun buyback programs exceed Congress' constitutional authority and undermine the Second Amendment's guarantee that the "right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed."

3. Anti-Terrorism Authority

H.R. 3162, known as the "USA Patriot Act," was passed by the House on October 24th, passed by the Senate the next day, and signed into law the day after that. The Act, introduced in response to the September 11th terrorist attacks, gives law enforcement and intelligence agencies vast new powers to combat terrorism.

This bill expands the list of crimes deemed terrorist acts; increases the ability of law enforcement to secretly search homes and business records; expands the FBI's wiretapping and surveillance authority; and provides for nationwide jurisdiction for search warrants and electronic surveillance devices, including the legal extension of those devices to e-mail and the Internet.

4. Education

The final version (conference report) of H.R. 1 would overhaul education proposals to increase school accountability and reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) for six years. This bill would require states to test students in reading and math in grades three through eight annually, provide new accountability measures for schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress, and give schools greater flexibility to spend federal funds. It would include about \$26.3 billion for federal elementary and secondary education programs and \$13.5 billion for Title I programs for disadvantaged children in fiscal 2002.

The federal government has no constitutional authority over education.

5. Debt Limit Increase

This bill (S. 2578) would increase the public debt limit by \$450 billion for a new ceiling of \$6.4 trillion on the National Debt.

The supposed need for increasing the debt ceiling by \$450 billion demonstrates that the federal government is still on a trajectory of out-of-control spending. Instead of raising the legal limit on what the federal government may borrow, Congress should cut spending.

6. War Authorization Against Iraq

This joint resolution (House Joint Resolution 114) authorizes the president "to use the Armed Forces of the United States as he determines to be necessary and appropriate in order to -- (1) defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq; and (2) enforce all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq."

The purpose of the resolution is to enforce UN Security Council dictates. Since the Constitution gives Congress the sole responsibility for declaring war, this resolution represents congressional abdication of its responsibility.