



**By Jan Schultz**  
**The Imperial Republican**

If a plan to reduce the United States' growing debt is not addressed seriously in the coming years, the consequences will put us in uncharted waters.

That's the assessment of Nebraska U.S. Sen. Mike Johanns, who met with 30 area residents at a community coffee last Thursday in Imperial.

Imperial is one of a number of communities Johanns is visiting during the Senate's August recess.

There are many important issues being dealt with in Washington D. C. now, but Johanns said the budget and its growing debt must be addressed first.

If not, nothing else will matter, he said.

"We are a \$14 trillion economy and if we don't figure this out, it will have worldwide impact," he said.

Displaying a number of charts, Johanns showed that the country's anticipated revenues of \$2.567 trillion will fall about \$1.267 trillion short of the President's Fiscal 2011 \$3.834 trillion budget.

Showing the budget breakdown, Johanns noted 57% of the spending is mandatory on such programs as Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security.

Another 22% is earmarked as discretionary spending, which includes areas such as the military.

The remainder of the budget, or 14%, is considered nondiscretionary spending. Even if all of that spending was frozen, it will not solve the debt problem, Johanns said.

Another chart showed how the national debt has grown since 1970. Forty years ago, the debt was \$380 billion. Today it is over \$13 trillion.

Johanns, 60, noted that in his adult lifetime the U.S. has been in debt.

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