By Russ Pankonin, The Imperial Republican

With the nation's fiscal cliff crisis behind us for at least another two months, the issue still remains unsolved. In the coming months, Congress will be called upon to make some of the most important decisions for our country ever.

Republicans want spending cuts. Democrats want to protect social needs such as Medicare and Social Security. Perhaps our elected officials can find some common ground unbesmirched by political partisanship and rancor.

In our own households and businesses, we all know that we can't live beyond our means. Sometimes that requires some sacrifice, like putting off buying some things we'd like to have. Congress needs to adopt that same mind set.

As every niche group and special interest gets a bigger piece of the pie, our government has been borrowing money at an alarming rate to fund that bigger piece of pie. Now that bill is coming due.

If our country is going to survive this debt crisis, then it means that we need to spend far less on the things we don't need and cutback on some of those things we still really need. It all sounds great in principle, until it affects you directly. What are you willing to give up?

Whether you realize it or not, we all get some benefits in one form or another from the federal government.

Whether it's federal road funding, Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement for our hospital, federal school lunch funding or farm payments, we've grown rather accustomed to these perks.

For our nation to prosper, it's going to mean a little sacrifice by everyone. Whether that's in the form of higher taxes and/or reduced services, we're all going to have to give a little.

It's no longer fine to have the attitude that we welcome less government spending, whether on the local, state or federal level, just as long as it doesn't affect me.

Here's where the rubber meets the road. What sacrifices are you willing to make, because we can't continue on the path we are today.