



A Manual For New-Style Republicans

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History records that we Americans are exceptional - a nation of out-of-the-box thinkers who are can-do in spirit, superior in ability and indefatigable in defense of our "don't tread on me" liberties. But despite our strengths, here we are in the winter of 2011, in the suffocating grip of a failed federal government that has pushed us to the brink of financial disaster.

Unless the planned rescue attempt by the new Republican majority in the House is successful and quick, we will be forced over the edge by the combination of Barack Obama's radicalism and Harry Reid's tawdry shenanigans in the Senate.

And don't forget Ben Bernanke at the Fed and his irrational exuberance for printing cheap money.

"Quantitative easing is a dangerous game with only a small potential upside," says Harvard's Martin Feldstein.

Washington has done so much dumb stuff for so long that many Americans have almost come to think that it is normal - even inevitable - for our government to pick our pockets, insult our intelligence, suppress our freedoms and impair our economy. But the recent destructiveness of Obama and the Democrats in Congress has been so outrageous that even the most government-tolerant people are ready to revolt.

In the midterm elections, the voters punished the Democratic exemplars of bad governance for being abusive (ObamaCare), profligate (more than \$1 trillion wasted in the false name of stimulus) and inept (killing jobs instead of creating them). The next step for the voters in 2012 is to replace the regrettable Obama and his remaining henchmen in Congress with people who are examples of American Exceptionalism.

No longer will Washington push and plunder America. Rather, when the genius and good character of the American people are again applied to our governance, Washington will be transformed. Our would-be master will instead become our obedient servant, quietly and efficiently going about the people's business, pinching every penny and staying out of the way.

A "how-to" manual of good governance is available to the newly elected Republicans coming to Congress with a mandate to restore competence and integrity to the Capitol. It is called "A Roadmap for America's Future." It was pioneered by Congressman Paul Ryan - the new Chairman of the House Budget Committee. He is now being joined by a large group of other new-style Republicans.

The "Roadmap" explains in the simple elegance of superior logic how the failed federal government can be rebuilt in a way that makes everyone better off. Social Security can be improved and made financially sound. Health care can be plentiful, reasonable in price and strictly between the doctor and the patient.

Taxes can be fair, low and understandable. The economy can grow, creating jobs and boosting incomes. And government can serve America's other needs with much less money.

Government frugality is a case where less equals more. A dollar put to work in the private sector enlarges the economic pie (jobs and incomes) by far more than a dollar - but a dollar spent by government typically does not.

Thus - to minimize the economic loss - a well-run government will tax and spend as little as possible. It will seek the most bang for every buck and will solve problems with smarts instead of futilely throwing money at them.

A recent internal government study (discontinued by Obama) reveals that, even by federal bureaucrats' own self-assessments, about 50% of Washington's high-cost programs received failing grades of "D" or lower for effectiveness. The combined budgets of just these failed programs alone were in amount equal to about half of last year's federal deficit.

The new Congress should immediately reassess all existing federal programs on a strict cost-benefit basis and apply the same "is it really worth it" test to all future enactments. The first question is whether the public benefit of the program (even if efficiently performed) is sufficient to justify its true cost, which includes the job-killing effects of taxes to pay for it. Typically, an additional \$1 of tax does about \$3 of collateral damage, mostly to wage earners.

Through the Internet and otherwise, the public must be involved in cost-benefit budgeting. When the voters see the true cost of government on an item-by-item basis, weigh the costs against the benefits and are given a choice, they will become enthusiastic budget-cutters.

Good governance requires a truth-based partnership between the voters and Washington. This used to be the norm and was known as "representative government." Perhaps it can begin anew under the banner of "Americans for the Roadmap."

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