

"Writing the truth
as I see it;
trying not to
offend
those who will
disagree."

The truth as I see it™

Idaho Common Sense™



Craig L. Bosley, MD

What should we ask Congress?

February 9, 2009

Last week President Obama reprimanded Wall Street CEOs' for their outrageous salaries and spending, saying they must show "restraint and responsibility." Should he have admonished Congress instead, because it puts Wall Street executives to shame with irresponsible spending. Moreover, Congress displays righteous indignation toward companies going on extravagant junkets and sponsoring lavish conferences, while it does the very same thing.

Perhaps writer P. J. O'Rourke was correct saying, "Giving *money and power to government is like giving whiskey and car keys to teenage boys.*" *But, this is probably an unfair statement because it insults teenage boys.*

Rahm Emanuel, the new White House Chief of Staff, gave Congress advice on the economic crisis saying, "Never let a serious crisis go to waste...(because) it's an opportunity to do things you couldn't do before." Congress quickly decided he meant the sky is the limit. So, what are some examples of projects our Congressional teenagers propose to stimulate the economy?

Congress wants to give Amtrak \$1 billion, even though it has not earned a profit in the last 40 years. It believes it should interfere with the economy in this way, keeping a failed business afloat. Congress also wants \$400 million for global warming research? Should this even

be a part of an economic stimulus package or should it be debated separately, on its own merits?

The Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee supports giving \$2.25 billion to the National Parks Service, an amount more than their entire annual budget. Could he be offering his support because his son is the chief lobbyist for the National Parks Association?

The stimulus package also includes 32 new government programs, supposedly short term. President Reagan warned us of what happens to new government programs saying, "A government bureau is the nearest thing to eternal life we'll ever see on this earth."

All this said, what should we demand of Congress? Should we demand they limit their actions to their Constitutional powers? Should we demand they limit their involvement with the economy to oversight, leveling the playing field nationally and internationally, and then allowing the free markets to work? Should we demand they balance the budget and develop a plan to pay off the national debt in a finite time with responsible spending and no tax increases?

Rather than fixing the problem, Congress spends its time fixing the blame. But in the end who is at fault? "We the people" are at fault.

We are the owners and board of directors of this company called the United States. Moreover, we regularly visit the voting booth to hire and fire senior management.

Several years ago the Idaho State Journal developed questions for candidates, allowing the voters to compare their views on the issues. We need to do that again, but more simply.

We need to ask our elected officials only two questions. The first, "Did you vote for any spending that was not part of a balanced budget with no new taxes?" The second, "Did you vote for anything the Constitution does not list as an enumerated power of Congress?" If they answer yes to either question we fire them and hire someone else.

For too long, we have allowed Congress to divide and conquer us. They keep us so busy arguing partisan politics that we cannot work together to take back control of our government. We must give them a choice; either work for "We the people" or else live the advice of artist Edward Langley who said, "What this country needs are more unemployed politicians."

We are "We the people." The government is our servant. Thomas Jefferson observed, "When the government fears the people there is liberty; when the people fear the government there is tyranny."

Maybe Washington needs fewer politicians and more citizens.