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Jun 4 2009, 4:20 pm by [Derek Thompson](#)

GOP Proposes Spending Cuts. Are They Serious?

At nearly \$2 trillion, the deficit is a monster. So the GOP has [proposed](#) \$375 billion of budget cuts to pare it down. That's the good news. The bad news is that when you peak under the hood of the engine, you see two big wrenches. 1) \$317 billion of the estimated cuts is just a cap on discretionary spending, which is a make-believe item that will never pass Congress. 2) The new, actionable ideas amount to only \$5 billion a year, which is a hardy 0.3% of the estimated deficit.

As the Cato Institute blog [points out](#), if you're aiming to amputate billions of dollars off the budget, why keep defense spending off the operating table? I don't know that we should cut military spending *in half*, but it is fairly absurd for a party of fiscal conservatism to hold our military budget in such sacred esteem.

[Matt Yglesias](#) swats away one of the non-imaginary items, which would cut federal support for bike areas. While I agree with him that bikes are nice -- for the environment, for traffic congestion and for riders --I also think that [Tim Fernholtz](#) over at The American Prospect has the right idea that Democrats should take these suggestions seriously. Here are some that seem not crazy:

- Eliminate Wealthier Communities from the Community Development Block Grant Program -- \$1.7 Billion
- Require Federal Agencies to Purchase Lowest Cost Vehicles
- Terminate Funding To Promote the Sale of Brand Name Food Products and Alcoholic Beverages (MAP) -- \$71.5 Million

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Alex S **June 4, 2009 7:30 PM**

"\$317 billion of the estimated cuts is just a cap on discretionary spending, which is a make-believe item that will never pass Congress"

This is an asinine objection. This spending reduction passes Congress the same way every other possible cut passes Congress - by both houses passing it and the President signing it. It is not

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any more "make believe" than any proposed spending cut by anybody else.

This is like saying that Obama's cap-and-trade program is "make believe" because it will never pass Congress, and failing to offer an actual substantive objection. It is ridiculous.

The fact that none of the left-wing have any serious, substantive objections to the plan leads me to believe you are just not interested in cutting spending, period.

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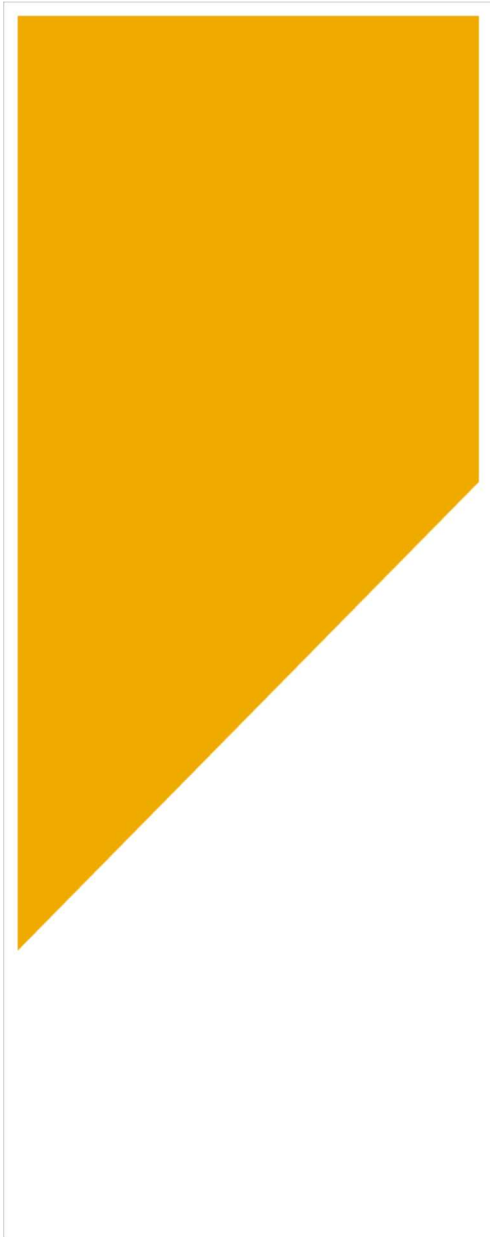
June 5, 2009 6:54 AM

Alex -the point is that even when the Republican party controlled congress, essentially from 1994 to 2006, it never once froze discretionary expenditures across the board. Reductions in military expenditures, even if just down to the budgeted amount (eliminating off-budget military allocations), would save a lot of money. Taking it off of the table is unserious. The military budget is bloated with discretionary war expenditures that Obama needs to show a backbone by cutting. Meanwhile, I agree that a discretionary expenditures freeze would also be a good idea for a couple of years. There are many parts of those budgets that can't be frozen, but freezes are a time to decide what is important and to totally eliminate some lines.

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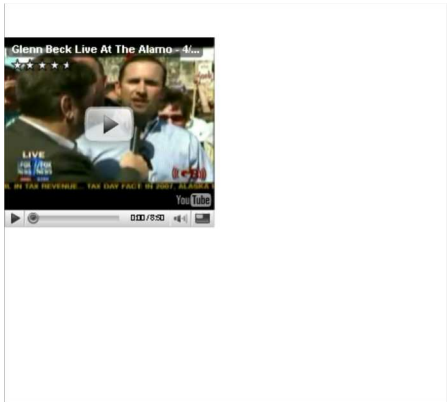
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