

A few changes for big impact

By: Matt Wegener - May 16, 2013

Just in case you didn't get your fill of political ads or have some money burning a hole in your pocket that you are desperate to donate to a campaign, there are already candidates being mentioned and Political Action Committees being formed in anticipation of the 2016 election. With that in mind, here is some no-charge and unsolicited suggestions for the next round of candidates.

First, the day after the Super Bowl should be a national holiday. This one probably needs little explanation. Many if not most people watch the game, eat too much, maybe drink too much, and the game ends relatively late on a Sunday night. Productivity is down on the following Monday since people are tired and spend time discussing the game and the commercials. A long weekend is clearly a win-win situation.

On a more serious note, a second campaign idea is a revised tax code. Several options would work far better than the current system. One is a flat tax system. A single rate of 15 to 20 percent would replace the current Income, Social Security, and Medicare taxes. Other taxes such as the Estate Tax (which should be renamed the theft-of-money-previously-taxed tax, but I digress) could also be abolished. This would make tax compliance much simpler for the individual as well as for businesses. The overall economy would improve, increasing employment and decreasing the amount spent on such items as unemployment and public assistance.

This discussion leads to the area of reforming government programs. First, the food stamp program. In America today we have lawmakers that have nothing better to do with their time than ban large sodas and monitor school lunch programs. However, I have seen several instances of people buying fountain sodas and candy with a state card. These programs should be limited to true staples. I have no problem helping those really in need to buy eggs, milk, bread, ground beef, and similar products. But if one is going to have access to public assistance, reasonable limits should be set on the available items. Stores could easily identify acceptable products by barcode and allow the assistance card to be used for those products only.

Another example is Social Security. This government-sanctioned Ponzi scheme is destined to collapse under the current format. A recent study by the Cato Institute found that private investment of employee social security funds, even using the most conservative strategy, would out-perform the benefits "promised" under Social Security. I emphasize the word "promise" because the benefits under Social Security are by no means guaranteed. The country currently has a little bit of a debt problem, which at some point could lead to a reduction in benefits. Social Security could be phased out over time. Workers could keep their money while employers would pay in a gradually declining percentage in order to pay for the current group of retirees and near-retirees who would be exempted from the changes. At a minimum, the employees should have an option of creating a private account which would belong to the individual and have a low

to medium-risk investment options. This would assist those who are unlikely to create a true private retirement account. Medicare could be handled in a similar fashion. A phase-out of the program over time while encouraging the use of private health savings accounts would be a much more effective system overall.

An additional idea is to abolish the Department of Education. Billions are spent annually with no measurable increase in test scores. Spending per pupil is not a good indicator of increased test scores. The function of education should be returned to the state and even local level. A family can choose to move to a different school district or choose a private school to provide a better education for their children. Removing the regulations of federal government programs will only increase the ability of school districts to separate themselves by performance. In addition, states should be encouraged to initiate some type of school voucher program in which some money follows the child. For example, a third of the property tax money paid by a family with school-aged children could go to a private school if the parents so choose. The concept of returning functions to the states (i.e. following the Constitution) could apply to other areas such as transportation and environmental regulations.

Also, Congress should have term limits and meet in Washington for only a portion of each year. The representatives should be required to be in their districts for at least half of their time in office. This would allow direct access to one's representatives. This change, coupled with the term limits, would make it more difficult and costly for lobbyists to exert influence.

These examples are but a few changes that could alter and, I believe, improve the current situation of the country. We need to take a step back towards common sense. Most importantly, we need Super Bowl Monday as our next national holiday.