

AMSPECBLOG

Kicking Americans Off the Dole

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Getting government spending under control requires more than a few folks with green eye shades trying to make the numbers balance. It is necessary to reduce people's expectations of government. Only when Americans ask for less can we roll back outlays and regulation.

The debt commission did not attempt to make this case. Robert Samuelson makes the point in the *Washington Post*:

But what was missing was a moral rationale for change, except for some familiar platitudes: "American cannot be great if we go broke"; or, "We have a patriotic duty . . . to give our children and grandchildren a better life." The trouble with these pleasing lines is that they don't address the practical question of why existing recipients of government support - farmers, the elderly, local governments, for example - should lose it.

Answers exist. It's not in the national interest to subsidize farmers, because food would be produced at low cost without subsidies. It's not in the national interest to subsidize Americans, through Social Security and Medicare, for the last 20 or 25 years of their lives because healthier people live longer and the huge costs make the budget unmanageable. It's not in the national interest to subsidize mass transit, because most benefits are enjoyed locally: If the locals want mass transit, they should pay for it.

Other than a few legislators like Paul Ryan, who on the GOP side is willing to make this case? And will Tea Party members stand up for principle when specific cuts--in Social Security, farm subsidies, and more--are proposed?

Those who advocate cutting spending have to make both the philosophical and the practical cases.

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