

PURCELL: My parents help rein in government spending

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President Barack Obama surprised everyone when he appointed two of the country's finest money-management experts to rein in runaway government spending: my mother and father.

"Good God!" said my father. "This year's budget is \$3.5 trillion! I remember 2002, when President Bush was the first president to propose a \$2 trillion budget. In 2008, he was the first to propose a \$3 trillion budget. In only eight years, our spending has soared by nearly 60 percent!"

"It's true, dear," said my mother. "Bush was no fiscal conservative. The debt grew from \$6 trillion to \$11 trillion under his watch. Obama's plan was to double it from \$11 trillion to \$20 trillion in the next nine years! He's already increased the national debt by nearly \$3 trillion!"

"It's no wonder why," said Father. "Right now we're spending almost 50 percent more than we're bringing in! We're on track for a \$1.7 trillion deficit!"

"That is beyond immoral," said Mother. "It is insane. Let's show these spendthrifts how to get by on less, as we had to do so many years."

"Of the \$3.5-trillion budget," said Father, "some \$2 trillion is for nondiscretionary items, such as Social Security, Medicare/Medicaid and the more than \$160 billion we spend servicing our national debt. Cutting entitlements is something politicians aren't likely to allow us to do, but it is something that has to be done."

"I'm with the Cato Institute people," said Mother. "We have to raise the retirement age for Social Security and 'introduce progressive price indexing to reduce the growth rate of future benefits.'"

"Let's move on to discretionary spending," said Father. "It accounts for nearly \$1.4 trillion of our bloated budget. The first thing we should do is reduce it to 2008 levels. But I don't see why we can't also impose a 5 percent to 10 percent across-the-board reduction beyond that."

"Neither do I," said Mother. "I remember the year we slashed our daily spending by 30 percent so we could pay for a new roof and furnace! We got by just fine."

"What is this nonsense with corporate welfare?" said Father. "We're giving billions to private organizations to grow or not grow crops, produce ethanol or support some other technology that is favorable to some politicians. Cutting farm subsidies alone will save us \$13 billion a year, says a panel of former senators in Esquire magazine!"

"That same panel found \$18 billion in annual savings by eliminating earmarks!" said Mother.

"There is plenty of low-hanging fruit that can drive spending cuts," said Father. "Every time a recession occurs, large private organizations find lots of ways to improve efficiency and reduce costs."

"You're correct as always, dear," said Mother. "The Heritage Foundation offers nearly \$340 billion in realistic annual savings by consolidating duplicate programs, handing off more programs to the states and implementing proven private-sector practices to rein in massive waste and fraud common to government programs."

"I like some other cuts outlined by the Cato people," said Father. "Do you know we spend nearly \$20 billion a year on foreign development aid alone?"

"The table has been set," said Mother. "What needs to be done is not so complicated at all. Rather than eat out every day, it's time the government bags its own lunch. That is what voters have voiced. It's long been time to roll up our sleeves and get our house in order."

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