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Scripps Howard News Service

September 30, 2010, Thursday 5:37 PM EST

Ambrose: The one Republican virtue

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SECTION: COMMENTARY

LENGTH: 698 words

You can legitimately beat up on Republicans for many things, for opportunism, betrayal of principle, cowardice under fire, past fiscal wackiness and more, but there's this to be said for them. They are not Democrats. As has been demonstrated again in the Pledge to America, they are at least at the moment a much superior political option.

That's not to say this pledge was anything wonderful. Intended to offer dramatic, energizing, compelling reasons to vote GOP, it was a long-winded mishmash of odds and ends that were mostly fine as far as they went, but didn't go nearly far enough and that failed to address several matters of major import.

Yes, you do have to love the business of Congress being required to say OK to new regulations that would increase the deficit. It would be great as proposed to repeal and replace Obamacare. By all means, tuck remaining bailout money out of sight. Quit further stimulus spending. Yes, save us from tax hikes that would pretty much destroy the economy.

But instead of just saying you're going to reduce taxes for small businesses, how about reducing crippling corporate taxes that are among the highest in the world, and instead of promising small-time budget rollbacks, how about promising an all-out assault on a budget bloated with waste, fraud, miscalculation and interventionist overreach?

Why not take on earmarks as a sign of integrity, and why not give the voters a trillion reasons to vote for you by talking about a trillion dollars and more in spending reductions in the years ahead, including an absolutely necessary Social Security and Medicare restructuring that need pose no affliction on the middle class or poor?

How about pledging an ultimate return to the kind of government that permits liberty, opportunity and growth, which is to say, deficit-free government, debt-reducing government, truly, seriously limited government in accord with the Constitution?

That debt? It's already just about as big a structural debt as exists in the world and is already posing dire consequences. It could eventually cause our economy to collapse if we don't address it, according to Ken Rogoff, a Harvard economist considered one of the top experts in the world on the subject.

This threat is George W. Bush's fault, right? No. He was hardly an innocent, but as has been pointed out by Karl Rove, a former aide, the Bush deficits were mostly fairly tame by historical standards and President Obama increased the debt by as much in months as Bush did in eight years. Obama's spending plans would triple it in another 10 years, Rove notes, and guess what that means? Disaster.

Oh, but look, Obama does have a commission studying things and it was agreed Congress would have to start finding ways to pay for any new expenditures. The first time that promise was tested was in the Republican insistence that compensating cuts be found for increased unemployment expenditures. The Democrats were outraged.

Meanwhile, there are bold, new, multibillion spending proposals and -- here is a thought that makes Democrats

want to party -- the idea of whacking upper middle class Americans with more taxes. Consider a study by economists at George Mason University's Mercatus Center that I read about. It shows that every new tax dollar spent to finance increased spending actually shrinks the economy, a conclusion backed up by another article noting that the Bush-era, reduced-taxes revenues were actually higher than those in the Clinton years.

Still something else I read was a Cato Institute paper about how scared some Keynesian economists were about drastically reduced federal expenditures after World War II and how a depression would then be in the offing. Guess what. The private economy took over and gave us prosperity beyond anything experienced in the war years. If too timidly, that's what Republicans are now talking about, and it is very nearly the opposite of what we are hearing from the Big Government Democrats.

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LOAD-DATE: October 1, 2010

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newswire

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