

DAILY KOS

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How Can We Trust Republicans, Who Presided Over 74% of Our National Debt?

No matter what your party affiliation, if you are concerned about our federal deficit and are considering voting based on your perceptions of that issue, here are some facts. Between 1952 and 2010, Republican presidents have spent 36 years in the White House, compared to 22 years for Democrats. That works out to 62 percent of the time for Republicans (see **Deficit Spreadsheet**, in red) and 38 percent for Democrats (in blue). Now, for the financial impact of the story, the debt created during each administration is as follows: Democratic presidents contributed 15.5 percent of the total deficit over those 58 years; Republican presidents contributed nearly 74 percent of the deficit, according to figures from the federal Office of Management and Budget.

The raw figures reveal the dollar amount of deficit left by each president. The bottom line: Democrats added about \$2 trillion to the federal deficit; Republicans added \$9.6 trillion. The Republican presidents' deficit spending is more than quadruple the amount added by Democratic presidents.

The difference between President Reagan's \$1.6 trillion in debt and President Clinton's \$1.4 trillion is significant in light of how often Republicans hurl the "tax-and-spend liberal" label at Democrats. What label perfectly describes George W. Bush's \$6.1 trillion? Radical Republicanism! According to Stephen Slivinski, director of budget studies at the Cato Institute, total government spending grew by 33 percent during Bush's first term alone. The federal budget as a share of the economy grew from 18.5 percent of GDP on Clinton's last day in office to 20.3 percent by the end of Bush's first term. Under Bush, Congress passed budgets that spent a total of \$91 billion more than the president requested for domestic programs. Bush signed every one of those Republican bills.

If these facts don't gibe with what you expected, well, that's the secret sauce of the Republican political strategy as far back as I can recall. That Republican strategy is simply this: keep repeating their big, fat lies. Lie about how Democrats are "tax and spend liberals" (Republicans are the big, wasteful spenders). Lie about how

Republicans are the party of smaller government (government growth in terms of spending has mostly followed Republican success in the presidency and Congress). Lie about how their policies of tax breaks for the wealthiest 1 percent help create jobs for the rest of us (they haven't, otherwise Obama would have inherited a much stronger economy and employment would have been trending down, instead of up, during his first year in office).

Have no doubt: Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan are the poster boys of lying. Their Radical Republican agenda calls for \$250,000 in annual tax breaks to each of the wealthiest households, raises taxes on the middle class, and cuts the benefits of Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, health care reform, and education, programs which largely benefit the majority of middle income Americans.

If you are a 1 percent income earner, then go ahead and support Romney-Ryan. They've got your back and will ensure your continued success, albeit at the expense of society as a whole. If you are in any other economic classification (earning \$250,000 a year or less), your vote for Romney-Ryan will be a vote against your own financial self-interest.

Indeed, as the president has been pointing out more frequently in his campaign, even the wealthiest Americans have benefited from his policies of holding down taxes on most Americans and expanding government spending while the Bush-Cheney Great Recession of 2008 slowly recedes. Obama's building the economic recovery from the middle class and out has, at its heart, the best interests of all America.

But don't expect any radical Republicans to sign on to that effort. Before Obama was even sworn in, Republicans met in secrecy to agree to a plan of zero cooperation with anything Democrats proposed. It was, and is, a pact with the devil they made to turn around their political fortunes following the 2008 election. The Republican promise to make sure Obama is a one-term president has resulted in the slow economic recovery and the lack of job creation since 2010, when many Congressional districts sent anti-Obama Tea Party members to the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Since then, virtually no progress has been made despite Obama's attempts at a grand bargain, including cost containment and jobs and infrastructure bills, that would have delivered easily 2 million jobs in the last year alone. Nevertheless, far-right Congressional inaction has met with radical Republican political success, with the added result of costing the government its pristine bond rating and leading to higher

borrowing costs that all taxpayers will need to cover. That's your radical Republican Party in action, and their gift to you: a hidden tax hike, in effect.

You sent them to Washington to do your bidding, didn't you? Have they done what you sent them there to do, create jobs? No, they lied to you, and now they expect you'll have a short memory about their abject failure. Instead, the radical Republicans have and are all about ensuring the continued success of the wealthiest among us and their top-down political agenda, using their vast superiority in private political fundraising to skew public opinion with more trickle-down policies, with the promise that you will benefit, too (a lie).

But don't worry. There's a simple fix. You can fire them come November, by electing folks who truly have been trying to put our best interests ahead of their own political survival: Democrats.