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Published: April 28, 2011  
Updated: 3:08 p.m.

# Tad DeHaven: Budget-cutting like it's 1995

By TAD DEHAVEN  
Cato Institute budget analyst, co-editor of www.downsizinggovernment.org

### Story Highlights

Looking at the cuts made by the Gingrich Republicans in 1995 provides a stark reminder that the more things change in Washington, the more they stay the same.

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ARTICLE

Republicans ride a wave of voter discontent over a Democratic president's big-government agenda to victory in the November elections. The new Republican majority in the House puts together a package of spending cuts. The defiant president tells upstart Republicans that he has "strongly and consistently opposed the House version of the bill because it would have unnecessarily cut valuable, proven programs that educate our children, invest in our future, and protect the health and safety of the American people."

President Barack Obama versus the new House Republican majority led by Speaker John Boehner? It sure sounds like it, but no. These events took place in 1995. The quote comes from President Bill Clinton's veto message of a package of spending cuts engineered by new House Speaker Newt Gingrich. The Gingrich Republicans would respond with a readjusted package of gross cuts totaling \$16 billion, which Clinton ultimately signed.



MCT ILLUSTRATION

And the Gingrich cuts provides a stark reminder that the more things change in Washington, the more they stay the same.

Republicans and Democrats recently ended two months of fighting over the GOP's intention to cut federal spending by agreeing to a deal that reduced funding by \$38 billion. Much has been made over the fact that the cuts amount to cleaning out the lint in Uncle Sam's pockets. Indeed, \$38 billion isn't very significant considering that the federal government is projected to run a deficit this year of more than \$1.5 trillion. Moreover, many of the cuts are of the "smoke and mirrors" variety. For example, \$6.2 billion in savings comes from penciling out money that wasn't used for the 2010 Census.

The agencies and programs that the Boehner Republicans were able to trim bear a striking resemblance to the trims that the Gingrich Republicans achieved in 1995. Here are 10 of the dozens of programs that got cut in both 1995 and 2011: Corporation for Public Broadcasting, National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, Youthbuild, Community Service Employment for Older Americans, Appalachian Regional Commission, Fund for African Development, Housing Counseling Assistance, Foreign Agricultural Service, Fossil Energy Research & Development.

The takeaway is that cuts are inferior to terminating entire agencies and programs. In the 16 years after the Gingrich Republicans achieved their cuts, the size and scope of federal spending has exploded. That's because the federal budget is like the multiheaded Hydra of

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Greek mythology. Cut off one of its heads, and two new heads grew back. The key to slaying the beast was to cut off the head and burn the stump.

The Boehner Republicans argue that they did terminate dozens of federal programs. In a

rebuttal to critics, Boehner stated that the "agreement terminates more than 40 ineffective programs at the U.S. Department of Education alone." Unfortunately, the combined savings from these terminations don't appear to trim even a billion dollars from an agency that will spend over \$70 billion this year.

Notice also that Boehner soft-peddles the education terminations by labeling them "ineffective programs." The entire Department of Education is an unconstitutional, costly failure. Sadly, the man who wrote No Child Left Behind with the departed Sen. Ted Kennedy felt compelled to convey a message to the public that the GOP is only interested in axing spare parts that even Beltway bureaucrats agree aren't needed.

With the exception of more military spending for purposes of policing the world and defending wealthy allies, it's hard to discern a coherent philosophy behind the GOP's cuts. Yes, the House Republican leadership says that it's committed to repealing "Obamacare." Unfortunately, the charge is being mounted by individuals who helped ram through George W. Bush's Medicare prescription drug liability.

The cynical take on all of this is that, just like the Gingrich cuts, the same programs will still be there to be cut when a future Republican majority is elected – yet again – on the promise of limited government. However, the country's finances are such that we literally cannot afford to wait. Sure, the Boehner Republicans have to deal with Obama just as the Gingrich Republicans had to deal with Clinton. But that's no excuse for another round of lip-service to the Constitution and limited government.

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