How to Lay the Axe to Gov't Spending, Now

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WASHINGTON -- President Barack Obama has proposed a $3.73 trillion budget for 2012, which contains a blueprint to shave $1.1 trillion off the deficit over 10 years.

However, this year's deficit alone is expected to top $1.65 trillion.

In response, tough-talking Tea Party types and Republicans keep asking the question that House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, posed on NBC's "Meet the Press," Sunday, Feb. 13.

"When are we going to get serious about cutting spending?" Boehner asked.

After those Republicans promised to chop $100 billion from the government budget right away, GOP leaders have come up with just $61 billion in real cuts for this year.

"What's being proposed by the House leadership just isn't enough," said Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., himself a Tea Party favorite. Rand pointed out that that amount doesn't even scratch the deficit.

Paul himself has proposed $500 billion in cuts, still only a small chunk of the overall budget total.

"It really is literally only a third of one year's deficit. It is a modest proposal," he said. "But to people around here, it's incredibly dramatic."

"It reminds me of what Reagan once said. 'The closest thing to eternal life we see on this planet is a government program,'" Seton Motley, president of Less Government, told CBN News.

If politicians want to get really serious about cuts, federal spending experts like Motley and Chris Edwards, director of tax policy studies at the CATO Institute, have two separate plans already laid out.

Edwards has written a "bible" for deficit hawks titled, *Downsizing the Federal Government*. He is also constantly updating his proposed cuts on his website, downsizinggovernment.org.

Eliminate Fed Departments

Both men would eliminate entire federal departments.

"My official rule for that is any department that was created after 1800 probably shouldn't exist because the Founding Fathers knew what they wanted the federal government to do and they put it there," Motley explained.

By "there," he means in the U.S. Constitution. Both men question whether any program or department is constitutional and whether the state or local governments or private sector could do the job better.

For starters, both analysts would cut the U.S. Department of Education.

"It was created in 1979 by Jimmy Carter as a payoff to the teachers' unions," Motley said.

Edwards said the Education Department certainly hasn't improved test scores for America's students or moved them up the scale when compared against student test scores from other nations.

"They've probably strangled state and local governments with so much bureaucracy and regulations, it's probably hurt our test scores," he explained.

"To give you a counter-example to the United States, Canada ranks at the top of these international test score comparisons. It has no federal department of education at all," he said.

Another big target for both men is the Department of Agriculture.

"I think we were farming long before we had an Agriculture Department," Motley said.

Edwards pointed out that while the number of farmers has gone down 90 percent, the number of department employees has gone up 5,000 percent.

"A century ago we had about 2,000 people in the Department of Agriculture and we had something like 10 million farmers. Today, the ratio's sort of gone in reverse," he explained. "We've got 100,000 people in the Department of Agriculture and really only about a million or so farmers left."

"We were an agrarian society when the Founding Fathers founded us. If they didn't think we needed a Department of Agriculture, we certainly don't need one now," Motley agreed.

Edwards and Motley would also cut the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Edwards pointed out the agency gives homeowners $50 billion in subsidies each year.

"Housing subsidies caused real damage here. They helped over-expand and create a housing bubble, then the housing bubble crashed; damaged the whole economy," he explained.

Both men would also cut most federal tax dollars spent on the Commerce Department, and agencies dealing with land management, environmental protection, transportation and health, They contend that states or the private sector could handle all of these better.

"You've got Commerce, Interior, HUD, HHS, EPA, Education; that's a decent start," Motley said as he looked at his kill list.

They would also say goodbye to tax dollars for the National Endowment of the Arts and the Public Broadcasting System, saying its time is past.

"Government broadcasting is sort of like a symbol of banana republics," Edwards said.

American Voters Want Cuts

Sen. Paul said voters are ready, even eager, for such cuts to their government.

"Many of the voters won't accept anything less from us," he said. "They'll bring us back home if we're not bold because that's what they want."

One federal function many conservatives won't touch is the Department of Defense, for fear of looking weak on national security.

But Edwards' CATO Institute has proposed 19 big cuts he says wouldn't harm combat capability while at the same time, "would shrink the defense budget by about a fifth by 2020."

Motley said the military is "To kill people and break things. And beyond that, there's going to be waste, fraud, and abuse. Let's deal with that, too."

Edwards would save billions by shrinking the military's mission, which has grown so large that America's armed forces are bigger than all the rest of the world's combined.

"We're sort of the world's policeman, and we shouldn't be," Edwards insisted. "We should defend the United States."

He would also wipe out all foreign aid.

"A lot of the foreign aid money just goes to prop up corrupt government. That makes no sense at all," he said.

No Sacred Cows as Policy?

Motley and Edwards believe the new breed of Tea Party-backed lawmakers, like Sen. Paul, would chop both to the left and right, conservative and liberal favorites.

"They don't think any program is sort of a sacred cow," Edwards said.

They may be serious enough to truly reform the entitlement programs that are about to drown America in red ink.

"I'm tired of hearing that programs like Social Security and Medicare are a success when they're billions and billions and billions of dollars in the red," Motley complained.

"Only in Washington can something that's hemorrhaging cash, to the degree that Social Security and Medicare are, be viewed as a success," he continued.

"The current system is unsustainable," Edwards said.

Both men would slash federal pay as well.

"The average federal worker earned a $120,000 in wages and benefits in 2010. That's exactly double what the average private sector worker gets," Edwards pointed out.

Those who work in government may feel these types of cuts are too deep and too painful, but Sen. Paul insists they're good for the rest of America.

"If you shrink the government sector and you're in the government sector, there's pain. But the private sector expands," he argued.

"Money is better spent," he continued. "There's a more efficient use of dollars, and more profit and more wealth are created by the private sector than the public sector."

All together, Edwards' cuts would save $1 trillion a year.

"That would be cutting about a fifth of all federal spending over the next nine years," he said. "I think that's completely doable."

Motley's cuts would be much bigger.

"You're talking about 60, 70, 80 percent of the federal budget per annum," he explained.

Sen. Paul mocked those who are outraged over cuts.

"Everybody always wants to talk about 'Oh no, you're going to cut this!' Well, the alternative may be chaos if we don't get our debt under control," he said.

Edwards insisted if the U.S. government won't make huge, massive cuts that "the only other alternative is for Americans to get a massive tax hike like they've never seen in their history."

Some economists figure those taxes will have to be in the neighborhood of 55 to 65 cents of every dollar Americans earn.