

SEARCH

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Colbert Conservatism And The Cost Of Permanent War

What's Your Reaction?

A few weeks back, I wrote a column looking at how the media and political establishment spends an inordinate amount of time pretending to be outraged at the cost of priorities like health care while simultaneously ignoring the ballooning cost of permanent war-making. I was met with a wave of angry email from conservatives -- not at the Pentagon profligacy I referred to, but at criticism of Pentagon spending itself.

So this week, I responded with another column digging deeper into what we know about Pentagon spending. A preview:

- "All told, every man, woman and child in the United States will spend more than \$2,700 on these programs and agencies next year. By way of comparison, the average Japanese spends less than \$330; the average German about \$520; China's per capita spending is less than \$100." - Cato Institute

- "The Department of Defense, already infamous for spending \$640 for a toilet seat, once again finds itself under intense scrutiny, only this time because it couldn't account for more than a trillion dollars in financial transactions, not to mention dozens of tanks, missiles and planes." - Hearst Newspapers

- "President (Obama) is on track to spend more on defense, in real dollars, than any other president has in one term of office since World War II." - National Journal's *Government Executive Magazine*

These are numbers that were released well before President Obama's expected Afghanistan escalation -- an escalation that will (according to figures reported in the *New York Times*) drive the annual cost of that war alone to about \$80 billion a year -- or roughly the annual cost of the health care bill being debated in Congress.

As you'll see in the column, I cite some archconservatives -- including John McCain -- who have in the past courageously pointed out just how bloated our Pentagon budget really is. So the idea that you have to be some sort of ultraliberal to worry about defense spending is absurd. All you have to be is someone concerned with the long-term finances of our country -- and that's why I think my old boss, Rep. David Obey (D-WI), may get some real traction with his proposal for a war surtax to pay for Obama's expected (and, IMHO, ill-advised) Afghanistan escalation.

That my original column pointing out basic budgetary reality was criticized so vehemently and aggressively by so many conservative readers suggests that throughout America, our political discourse has been reduced to caveman-ish sloganeering -- in this case: "Pentagon spending, good; Pentagon criticism, bad." As I say in my column follow up this week, the reaction proves that many conservatives see Stephen Colbert's joke that "reality has a well known liberal bias" as a statement of truth -- rather than a wisecrack.

Read the whole column here.

The column relies on grassroots support -- and because of that support, it is getting wider and wider circulation (a big thank you to all who have helped with that). So if you'd like to see my column regularly in your local paper, use this directory to find the contact info for your local editorial page editors. Get get in touch with them and point them to my Creators Syndicate site. Thanks, as always, for your ongoing readership and help contacting local editors. This column couldn't be what it is without your help.

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