



Here's the pledge Joe Kyrillos should really sign

Paul Mulshine | Thursday, August 23, 2012

A lot of Republicans are upset that their U.S. Senate candidate, Joe Kyrillos, has said he won't take that pledge never to vote for a tax hike if elected.

Not me. That pledge has been a spectacular failure. If you doubt that, I can give you 16 trillion reasons why you're wrong.

That's the number of dollars in the national debt. And if that pledge offered by Americans for Tax Reform had worked as advertised, the debt would be close to zero. The members of Congress would have reduced spending when they realized there would be no revenue.

Here's how Grover Norquist, the author of that pledge, described the process when **I saw him speak** in Newark last year: "We put our foot on the air hose and we say it and we mean it. Then that pile of cash begins to dwindle."

Nice metaphor. But the reality is that hose is pumping pure oxygen onto a twelve-alarm fire. The fatal flaw in the pledge is that the pile of cash will never dwindle as long as the federal government can borrow the money and pass the bill to a future generation. Give a politician a chance to spend other people's money and he'll do it every time.

But let's imagine a pledge that would keep the politicians honest. The politicians I'm thinking of are all of those Republicans who've been resisting raising the debt ceiling over the past couple of years. They've certainly got a point when they say

the national debt is too high already. So how about a pledge never to raise the debt ceiling?

I was thinking of just how to word such a pledge the other day when my phone rang. On the other end was a guy by the name of Jonathan Bydlak. Bydlak told me that his group, the **Coalition to Reduce Spending**, had beaten me to it. Their **three-point “Reject the Debt” pledge** calls for candidates to never vote for an unbalanced budget and to “not vote to increase borrowing or the debt ceiling.”

Bydlak told me that so far 21 candidates for both Houses of Congress have taken the pledge. Among them is Ted Cruz, the U.S. Senate candidate from Texas who became a rising star among conservatives recently when he won a primary over the establishment candidate, Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst.

Bydlak told me that the minute Dewhurst heard that Cruz had signed the pledge, he immediately decided to do so himself. I suspect most Republicans would do the same once this pledge becomes popular.

Here’s where the fun begins. Let’s imagine the great majority of Republican Congressional candidates were to take that pledge tomorrow. And let’s imagine that the Romney-Ryan ticket wins the White House. And let’s imagine Kyrillos, now a state senator from Monmouth County, gets swept into the U.S. Senate in the landslide.

Perhaps Kyrillos himself has imagined that. That would explain another remark Kyrillos made in that interview with the Record’s Herb Jackson:

“I recognize the need to bring in revenue,” said Kyrillos. “We’re going to have to look at popular deductions we need to stop.”

That sort of talk outraged a lot of Republicans. But Kyrillos is right. We do need revenue - and lots of it. All those Republicans who claim to oppose tax increases seem to have forgotten that George W. Bush spent \$5 trillion more than he took in. That's a tax hike. He just sent the bill to future taxpayers.

Well, the future is now. If the debt problem is as bad as the GOP leaders say it is, we can't just keep adding to it for the eight years proposed by Mitt Romney or the 27 years proposed by Paul Ryan. (Here's **a good analysis** of just how timid the Ryan plan is.) We need to either cut a lot of spending or raise a lot of revenue – or do some of each.

So don't criticize Kyrillos. Blame the Republicans who controlled Congress in the George W. Bush years. If they had pushed through the Balanced Budget Amendment as they promised, we wouldn't be facing this problem. Bush could never have gotten away with cutting taxes at the same time he let spending soar. Barack Obama could never have spent all that money on the stimulus.

We don't have that amendment, however. But we do have this pledge. And from now on, any politician who signs the anti-tax pledge without also signing the anti-debt pledge can be dismissed as a complete hypocrite.

ADD: Uh-oh. Joe's back to form with this press release. If we don't start making some "imprudent" cuts we'll never decrease the deficit:

Middletown, August 22... Candidate for the U.S. Senate Joe Kyrillos (R-Monmouth) released the following statement regarding the Congressional Budget Office's recent warning about a recession in 2013.

“Today's warning by the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office that the tax increases and spending cuts scheduled to go into effect in January will lead to another recession is very troubling and reinforces the fact that Senator Menendez

is not only complicit in bringing our country to this point, but wants to push us off the fiscal cliff by kicking the can down the road forcing future generations to clean up his mess. Our country is struggling through the worst economic recovery since the Great Depression. To raise taxes and make imprudent spending cuts is not only bad policy, but it jeopardizes America's future prosperity. Senator Menendez and his colleagues must put the interest of the country ahead of their own political interests and extend the tax cuts to prevent the next recession and restore confidence and certainty in our economy.”

The process Kyrillos is opposing is called "sequestration." In reality it doesn't go nearly far enough toward reducing the deficit. For more on that watch the Cato Institute video below:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=s-nB6zQu9Mw

Also check this clip in which Ryan argues against raising the debt ceiling. Good stuff, but if the Romney-Ryan ticket wins they'll be raising the debt ceiling every year:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=ri65YIXFmA8