

Orange County Register

Published: Oct. 27, 2011

Editorial: Ron Paul's \$1 trillion in cuts

He alone among GOP candidates offers specifics on trimming budget.

The odds of Ron Paul being nominated by Republicans and defeating President Barack Obama are, in the words of one news service, "beyond remote." Perhaps. But Mr. Paul's "Plan to Restore America" is breathtaking, nevertheless. Candidates whose success may be less remote would do well to adopt this plan in large measure.

It's difficult to recall tax-and-spending reforms of this scope proposed by any previous, serious presidential candidate – and as long as the media and polls continue placing Mr. Paul among top Republicans contenders, he must be considered a serious candidate.

For years relegated to the political fringe, the libertarian physician and Texas congressman this campaign season is being treated as if what he has to say is worth hearing. We're pleased the media are acknowledging, if grudgingly, what the Register's Editorial Board has known for years. Mr. Paul makes much sense.

We also believe his message can resonate with voters. Indeed, were the Republican field winnowed from its current eight or more candidates to three or four, we would expect Mr. Paul to be among the survivors simply because his message is that compelling.

Today we're not advancing Mr. Paul's still admittedly long-shot candidacy. We are, however, applauding his plan, which you can evaluate at <http://bit.ly/rkfzql>.

Within three years, Mr. Paul says the budget can be balanced. He would start by cutting the planned \$3.7 trillion government spending by \$1 trillion in his first year. His plan does this without fiscal harm to Medicare or Social Security funding. This is remarkable considering these two entitlements constitute such a huge portion of the budget. But as Mr. Paul says, he intends to honor "our promise to seniors and veterans."

He would, however, permit younger workers to opt out of Social Security, an excellent idea to empower millions of people to control their own retirement investments while simultaneously relieving taxpayers of the mounting deficit that otherwise could bankrupt America.

Mr. Paul would convert the other great federal entitlement, Medicaid, and other welfare programs to state-administered block grants to permit innovation and tailoring to local needs rather than conforming to costly Washington diktats.

Except for Republicans who want to channel tax money to favored constituencies, many of Mr. Paul's other cuts should be warmly welcomed. Perhaps not defense. But, as he said in the most recent candidates debate, there is plenty that isn't real defense in the Defense Department budget. Ending foreign wars would go a long way to achieve his modest 15 percent reduction.

Meanwhile, true fiscal conservatives and limited-government champions should applaud Mr. Paul's proposal to eliminate five Cabinet departments, including one Ronald Reagan unsuccessfully targeted, Education, along with Commerce, Energy, HUD and Interior. He also would repeal Obamacare, and the onerous financial regulations of Dodd-Frank and Sarbanes-Oxley, while reducing the president's salary from \$400,000 to \$39,336, the median U.S. personal income. Mr. Paul would cut 10 percent of the federal workforce while reducing corporate taxes 15 percent and extending the Bush tax cuts.

Libertarian Cato Institute budget analyst Tad DeHaven told us Mr. Paul's plan should prompt other candidates to specify what they would cut. "If not," Mr. DeHaven said, "they should be prepared to explain to the electorate why taxpayers should keep funding the departments that Paul would ax." Let the explanations begin.