

# THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

## Reactions to Obama speech: Deficit reduction duel

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*Following are reactions from bloggers, columnists and politicians to President Obama's Wednesday speech outlining his plan to curb the federal deficit:*

•**Paul Ryan, U.S. congressman, R-Wisc:** "What we heard was a political broadside from our campaigner-in-chief. This is sad and unfortunate. Rather than building bridges, he's poisoning wells."

•**Michael Tanner, senior fellow at Cato Institute:** "... the president's speech does accomplish one thing: As he intended, it draws a clear distinction between his ideas and those of his opponents such as Paul Ryan. The president wants to spend (or as he repeatedly put it 'invest') more and raise taxes to pay for it. ... he envisions a smaller debt but a much bigger government. Congressman Ryan, in contrast, envisions a smaller debt as part of a smaller government that leaves both more money and more responsibility in the hands of individuals."

•**Jon Cowan & Jim Kessler, Politico.com:** "With today's address on deficit reduction, President Barack Obama is making a shrewd opening move for his 2012 campaign. ...In his speech, the president aims to shift the debate from 'Who wants to solve the problem?' to 'How do we solve the problem?' And looking ahead to 2012, that shift is likely to benefit him enormously. If there is a major, bipartisan budget agreement, Republicans cannot run on fiscal responsibility. If there is not, they get the blame. He wins either way."

•**Kevin D. Williamson, The Corner, National Review Online:** "Even if we took his plan seriously – and it is hard to – \$4 trillion in forgone deficits over 12 years does not amount to very much in the absence of a restructuring of the entitlement programs. This is what Paul Ryan gets and Barack Obama does not: The scale of those unfunded entitlement liabilities is shocking, in the neighborhood of \$100 trillion. Obama is talking about eliminating some deductions for 2 percent of U.S. households and squeezing some phantom efficiency out of the Pentagon, but he adamantly refuses to address the three things that absolutely must be addressed: Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid."

•**Paul Krugman, New York Times columnist:** "Much better than many of us feared [Obama's speech]. Hardly any Bowles-Simpson – yay ... I could live with this as an end result. If this becomes the left pole, and the center is halfway between this and Ryan, then no – better to pursue the zero option of just doing nothing and letting the Bush tax cuts as a whole expire."

•**Mitt Romney, former Massachusetts governor:** "Instead of supporting spending cuts that lead to real deficit reduction and true reform of Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security, the president dug deep into his

liberal playbook for 'solutions' highlighted by higher taxes. With over 20 million people who are unemployed or who have stopped looking for work, the last thing we should be doing is raising taxes on job-creators, entrepreneurs, and small business owners across America."

•**Massimo Calabresi, Time Magazine:** President Obama didn't offer a lot of specifics about how he intends to close the federal budget deficit in his speech at George Washington University on Wednesday, but he did make one thing clear: He intends to go head-to-head with Republicans over taxes. That makes political sense. If he's going to go after \$2 trillion in spending, as his aides say he will in coming negotiations, he's going to have to give Democrats, for many of whom that spending is sacred, some red meat. That red meat is \$1 trillion in tax hikes aimed primarily at the rich."

•**Steven Benen: Washingtonmonthly.com:** "As heartening as it was to hear President Obama's full-throated condemnation of the House Republican budget plan – he didn't pull any punches – what made his remarks this afternoon especially satisfying was his defense of the progressive vision. The point of the remarks was primarily to advance two goals: explain why Paul Ryan's radical proposal must be rejected and present a 'balanced' alternative towards long-term deficit reduction. But along the way, the president made a point of reminding his audience that government, the institutions of the modern welfare state, and the modern social compact are worthy of a spirited defense. Indeed, to hear Obama tell it, the progressive vision is the American vision."

•**Jim DeMint, U.S. senator, R-SC:** "The president admitted we have a spending problem, but his solution is always the same: spend more, tax more, borrow more."

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