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Let's make the U.S. economy first in the world again

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In his recently-released strategy for reviving America's economy, Ohio Governor John Kasich became the first Republican candidate to clearly articulate a plan for tearing down the barriers that Washington's size and cost pose to job creation.

Balancing the budget in eight years, cutting taxes, reforming regulations, federalism, and energy independence are all part of Kasich's plan and reflect his fundamental commitment to making America the world's leader in economic freedom..

Aren't we already first in economic freedom? No, we are not. In its annual ranking, the Cato Institute shows that 15 other countries, including Canada and the United Kingdom, are less burdened by regulations, bureaucracy and counterproductive taxes than the U.S. Alarminglly, America fell from 2nd to 16th place since 2000. No wonder most Americans have had no real growth in family income for years.

The problem with America's economy is called Washington. Stagnant growth isn't from the federal government doing too little; it's from too much regulating, taxing and stubbornly standing in our way. To paraphrase Ronald Reagan, Washington is not the solution; it's the problem.

As John Kasich has said, "We need less government and more 'us.'" That is a message that would have gotten our Founding Fathers' heads nodding. Kasich's plan clearly shows his big vision and his commitment to taking our money, power and influence back from Washington and returning it to the states and communities where we live.

His proposal will put us on the road to a balanced budget in eight years. He knows how because he has done it in Washington and Ohio. The balanced budgets of 1998 through 2001 were not written by the White House. They resulted from the budget blueprint Kasich wrote as chair of the Budget Committee, which produced surpluses four years running. We actually paid down the national debt. Unfortunately, when he and his allies left Congress, fiscal discipline collapsed.

Well, it's coming back, folks. In Ohio he turned an \$8 billion annual deficit into a \$2 billion surplus and cut taxes \$5 billion.

The greatest challenge is bringing Democrats and Republicans together. Budgets are about agendas and priorities. They are about reforming entitlement programs—an issue where consensus has eluded Washington. Kasich helped reform welfare in Washington once before and he's reformed Medicaid and public assistance in Ohio. No other candidate can say the same.

Kasich's strategy cuts taxes to spark growth. The maximum personal tax rate will drop from 40 to 28 percent. The Earned Income Tax Credit will grow to help those with low incomes. Long-term capital gains taxes will fall to 15 percent. The estate tax will be dead. The top business tax will drop from 35 percent to a world-competitive 25 percent. And we will remove the barriers that keep American companies from bringing \$2 trillion in profits back from overseas to create huge numbers of new jobs here.

Kasich will put a one-year moratorium on new regulations, and put us on the road to true energy independence, by removing roadblocks to production of all forms of energy. He will approve construction of the Keystone Pipeline.

The heart and soul of Kasich's renewal of economic freedom is transferring major pieces of Washington's responsibilities back to the states. It starts in Kasich's plan with the Department of Education. He agrees with those who know that Washington has no business trying to be America's principal or its teacher. Education is a local issue, and decisions should be made by parents, communities and local educators. We need high standards that are set locally. He will bundle the department's funds and send them back to the states with few strings attached and then shrink the Education Department down to a research center. It will no longer have the authority or funds to micromanage anything.

States can manage Medicaid far better than Washington. Kasich proved that in Ohio, where he reduced the annual growth in Medicaid spending from 10 percent to 2 percent, while caring for more people and turning around quality. Kasich led Ohio to do this through innovation and will enable states to do even more by getting Washington out of the way.

And Kasich will return the federal gas taxes to the states, leaving only a small portion in Washington for legitimate national priorities, and downsizing the Transportation Department. Eliminating the middleman means more money for highways and transit.

Kasich recognizes that big government is bad for Americans. It is wasteful, insular, arrogant and even abusive. Reclaiming our freedom will take guts and Kasich is the person who can lead America to do it. He thinks big and has the courage of his convictions. With his proven ability to lead and reform he will help Americans reclaim our economic freedom and achieve the security and opportunity we want.