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## A Key Midterm Issue: Deficits

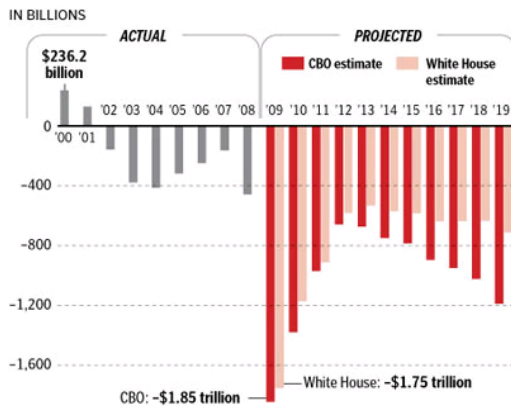
by: [DaveJ](#)  
 Fri Apr 30, 2010 at 15:30



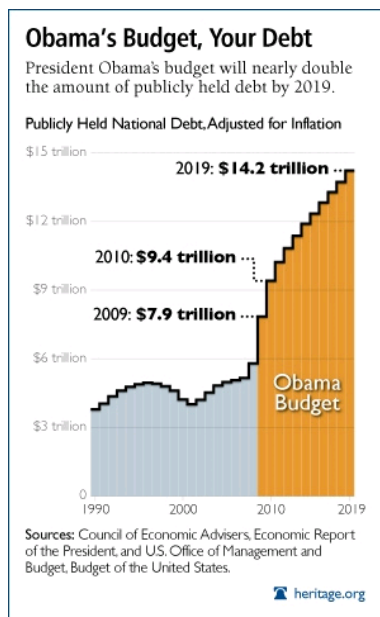
I think right now the key midterm issue is the budget deficit. This is a sign that Democrats are not in control of the message. People have become afraid that the government is "spending too much," and the Republicans are successfully capitalizing on that fear.

The big shock that got this going was the report last year of a \$1.4 trillion deficit for the 2009 budget year. The entire conservative machine then let loose with a barrage, repeated over and over, that "Obama tripled the deficit." Did I say it was repeated over and over? And, of course, a trillion-dollar deficit means the debt will increase by \$10 trillion over 10 years so they can say that "Obama's budgets increase the debt \$10 trillion." This set in motion a dynamic that drives Republicans toward capturing a number of seats, possibly even the House and/or Senate.

Conservative propaganda outlets like the Heritage Foundation published charts like this one, titled "Bush Deficit vs. Obama Deficit in Pictures":



And this one, reflecting what this means for debt accumulation:



Both charts, and the accompanying message have been everywhere, in newspapers, op-eds, letters-to-the-editor, radio, TV, blogs, everywhere.

**But here's the thing. Basic math: A budget year that ends 8 months into a President's first year wasn't that President's budget. 2009 was Bush's last budget.**



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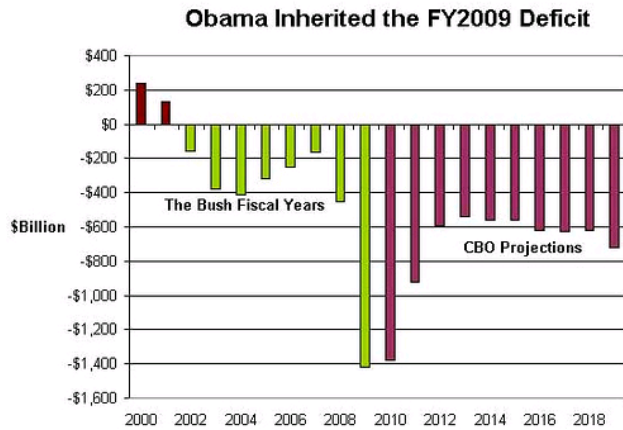
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DaveJ :: A Key Midterm Issue: Deficits

The fact is that Obama's first budget year ends in September. See the conservative Cato Institute on this: [Don't Blame Obama for Bush's 2009 Deficit | Cato @ Liberty](#). Here is an honest chart from Cato (and click through to the whole post):



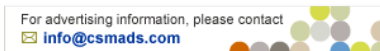
Also, in last year's [How Trillion-Dollar Deficits Were Created](#) the New York Times pointed out that only \$145 billion of the huge \$1.4 trillion 2009 deficit was from spending on the stimulus program and only another \$56 billion was from other Obama programs. This is a fraction of that \$1.4 trillion deficit of Bush's last budget year.

As for Obama "adding \$10 trillion to the debt," here is how it works. Suppose you take over a company that is losing \$100 million a year, and your job is to turn it around. So perhaps the second year the company only loses \$70 million, \$30 million the third year, and breaks even in year four. You saved the company. But in those years the company "lost" another \$100 million. Should you be fired?

So OK, the deficits were Bush's, and the ongoing debt accumulation is the result of that as well. **Obama is actually cutting those deficits a lot.** But that doesn't matter if the public doesn't know it! What are the Obama people doing about that? It's not a good sign when a blog at the Cato Institute is on the front line of the President's defense, and nothing is reaching the public.

Similarly, the public believes that the health care bill (the one that orders us to give our money to the giant insurance corporations) "spends a trillion dollars." But in fact it cuts the deficits a lot. But the Obama people are also not getting the word out about that.

As I said, this is a key point, possibly the main issue, for the coming midterm elections. But I'm just one guy on a blog somewhere. When does the massive Democratic communications machine kick into action?



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**The messaging has been awful** (4.00 / 1)

Doubly awful.

First, Obama helps the GOP make the deficit a huge issue, he can barely talk about, well, anything without stressing how important it is to control deficits, never mind that that's the last thing we should be focusing on in the middle of an unemployment crisis. That's bad enough, but then, to compound the error, Obama and Dems haven't pushed the notion that they're fiscally prudent relative to Republicans.

Which is to say, if you insist on being a moderate Republican pol, at least be an effective one.

by: [david mizner](#) @ Fri Apr 30, 2010 at 14:49:26 PM CDT

**The deficit IS a problem** (0.00 / 0)

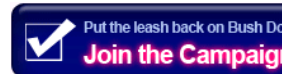
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which is why the messaging is bad..you can't defend the deficit, all you can do is try to shift the blame, and nobody ever believes Democrats when they try to shift the blame.

It's really difficult to defend deficits when you got news anchors running around hair on fire pointing to Greece and Portugal and then telling everyone we're gonna be taken over by China because of the debt.

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by: [DTOzone @ Fri Apr 30, 2010 at 14:56:31 PM CDT](#)

**A simple problem, really (0.00 / 0)**

Yes it is a problem, but solving it is actually simple. Look where they came from - cutting taxes on the rich and increasing military spending. Simple enough to solve, put taxes back where they were and get it through our heads that the Soviet Union is gone and we don't need a fully mobilized military with a nuclear triad, etc. anymore.

Politically, though, is another story. They are able to use their massive resources to influence the politicians and public attitudes, so we're kind of stuck.. Can't raise taxes or cut the military budget, and instead the President convenes a deficit commission that talks about cutting retirement and health care. Sheesh.

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[Seeing The Forest -- Who is our economy FOR, anyway? Twitter: dcjohnson](#)

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by: [DaveJ @ Fri Apr 30, 2010 at 15:12:22 PM CDT](#)

[ [Parent](#) ]

**re: deficit (4.00 / 1)**

all you can do is try to shift the blame, and nobody ever believes Democrats when they try to shift the blame.

you remind people who inherited surpluses, who started the war in iraq, who gave 2 tax cuts to the wealthy, who signed the bailouts.

some won't believe you but those won't vote for you eitherway. now, just keep repeating your message and you'll make it. don't give up.

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by: [The Big Hurt @ Fri Apr 30, 2010 at 23:14:13 PM CDT](#)

[ [Parent](#) ]

**The response is usually (0.00 / 0)**

something in the neighborhood of "that's nice, so what are you going to do to fix the problem they caused?"

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by: [DTOzone @ Sat May 01, 2010 at 00:47:13 AM CDT](#)

[ [Parent](#) ]

**and? (0.00 / 0)**

you answer with your proposal

that's easy

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by: [The Big Hurt @ Sat May 01, 2010 at 00:57:30 AM CDT](#)

[ [Parent](#) ]

**which we did (0.00 / 0)**

sorta.

but what that means is you can't keep repeating it, because eventually it just gets taken as "oh, you have no proposal"

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by: [DTOzone @ Sat May 01, 2010 at 01:25:27 AM CDT](#)

[ [Parent](#) ]

**come on (0.00 / 0)**

you don't keep offering the same solutions: you change things

what you don't change is the blame.  
war, tax cuts, surpluses/debt, bailouts. non-stop.

you say they dropped it after a while.  
I say keep it up. don't give an inch. show discipline.

---

by: [The Big Hurt @ Sat May 01, 2010 at 03:22:17 AM CDT](#)

[ [Parent](#) ]

**people eventually tune you out (0.00 / 0)**

that's what I'm saying. People eventually just stop listening to you when all you do is blame someone else. That's what started to happen.

People don't want to hear blame, they want to hear solution. We can't just keep blaming the past, we look like we don't have any confidence in our solutions.

Florida  
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Kansas  
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Maryland  
Massachusetts  
Michigan  
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Wisconsin

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by: [DTOzone @ Sat May 01, 2010 at 10:06:45 AM CDT](#)

[ Parent ]

**putting the blame for what happened where it belongs is extremely valuable** (0.00 / 0)

People eventually just stop listening to you when all you do is blame someone else.

where did I say that all you do is blame?  
you also offer your solutions

did solution A not work after 1 year? try solution B

how many different things did FDR try in the first great depression?

That's what started to happen.

no. what happened is they abandoned their message. it's not only the campaign that needs a message

did the right abandon its 'obama=socialism' card? no, no matter how absurd it is.

People don't want to hear blame, they want to hear solution.

you offer solutions. that doesn't mean you don't place the blame where it belongs.

We can't just keep blaming the past.

you don't just blame the past.

we look like we don't have any confidence in our solutions.

it looks like you don't have confidence in your solutions when you abandon your message. your principles too.

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by: [The Big Hurt @ Sat May 01, 2010 at 12:04:12 PM CDT](#)

[ Parent ]

**Progressives have to face reality with the deficit** (0.00 / 0)

I read posts all the time criticizing the president whenever he mentions his concern over our longterm deficit, and I heard similar complaints when Clinton and Obama did it as candidates. Listen, the deficit messaging war is over, its a bad thing as far as most americans are concerned. If Obama tried to minimize their relevance, or even championed the notion that it's not important right now because the economy needs help, something EVERY economist believes, he would get killed and be hurt by it. He wouldn't convince any wavering independants or moderate dems that he was right and would lose support in the process.

The debate now, as DTOzone pointed above, should be about how we got here and how to best get rid of the deficit, not whether its important that we should. So, firstly, it's important that the Obama administration remind people of the wars, tax cuts, and the bank bailout, all of which happened under Bush. They did this when they first came in but after a couple of months they started getting pushback from the "liberal" media with the narrative that they were "blaming" the Bush administration, there were a couple of contentious exchanges with Gibbs and the press about this. Like many things, the Obama administration didn't fight back but instead has cutback on what they believe was a perception they're "too partisan" comment like simply saying 95% of the deficit he inherited. Stupid idea and something they better change quick if they want to salvage their majorities.

The second thing is make the debate about how we get out of the deficit, and as they say about elections, a choice as opposed to a referendum, The biggest deficit reduction in Obama's budget proposal wasn't their cosmetic budget freeze, with had the double whammy of not actually doing anything while mainstreaming completely idiotic republican talking points like a budget freeze. But their biggest deficit reduction measure was the incoming revenue coming from wealthy individuals, hedge funds, and the oil industry. They tried to rescind the subsidies from large agribusiness but that predictably isn't and won't go anywhere. But my point is the administration can make this a debate about HOW to cut the deficit. If its Social Security cuts vs Taxes on the wealthy, guess who would win??

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by: ai002h @ Fri Apr 30, 2010 at 15:38:30 PM CDT

**But see** (0.00 / 0)

They did this when they first came in but after a couple of months they started getting pushback from the "liberal" media with the narrative that they were "blaming" the Bush administration, there were a couple of contentious exchanges with Gibbs and the press about this. Like many things, the Obama administration didn't fight back but instead has cutback on what they believe was a perception they're "too partisan" comment like simply saying 95% of the deficit he inherited.

That pushback means that message wasn't getting through anyway and instead the administration was being labelled one with no solutions, just blame.

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by: DTOzone @ Sat May 01, 2010 at 00:50:25 AM CDT  
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