

Republican American

End the war; spend more?

When liberal Democrats squawk about government waste, it's only because they want the money spent in ways that help re-elect liberals. After two years of spending the nation into apocalyptic debt and themselves into the electoral doghouse, congressional Democrats now favor reducing "government costs," starting with "corporate tax loopholes." They hope no one will remember they created loopholes by enacting "targeted tax cuts" to reward their corporate patrons.

Likewise, with so many special interests begging for more federal largess but lacking the means of raising America's debt limit without caving to House Republicans' demands for spending reductions, liberals want America out of Afghanistan immediately to save \$113 billion a year. And by save they mean spend. The U.S. Conference of Mayors, a subsidiary of the Democratic National Committee, wants to redirect war funding to America's 150 largest cities so their liberal mayors can grease their own re-election skids via generous contracts to unionized government employees, cushy jobs for friends and relatives, lucrative government contracts for campaign contributors; etc.

America has been fighting in Afghanistan since 2001, yet National Public Radio, a reliable liberal voice and itself a government dependent, waited until now to criticize the \$20.2 billion the military spends annually to provide air conditioning for U.S. troops stationed there and in Iraq. "That's more than NASA's budget," NPR bristled. But the waste hardly ends there: "The 30,000 troops who will return home by the end of next year were sent to Afghanistan in 2009, at a cost of about \$30 billion. That comes out to about \$1 million a soldier."

The way-left Center for American Progress Action Fund took the argument to the next level by showing how the \$113 billion would be spent to better — read: liberal — use:

"Provide 57.5 Million Children With Low-Income Health Care For 2011." According to the Census Bureau, that's almost twice the number of children of low-income families in America.

n Pay for health insurance for 23 million low-income Americans this year. Through Medicaid, taxpayers already cough up more than \$200 billion annually, including \$22.5 billion for fraudulent payments, to provide health care to nearly 50 million Americans. Liberals can spin this anyway they wish, but this is more spreading the wealth around; penalizing success to reward failure, discourage self-reliance and personal responsibility, and foster government dependence.

n Distribute 20.2 million Pell Grants or 14.3 million college scholarships. The flood of government money into higher education is the main reason college costs have more than tripled in real dollars since the 1980s. As it is, a 2009 Cato Institute study based on government data concluded: "(T)he main effect of federal student-aid programs may not be to transfer wealth from taxpayers to students, but from taxpayers to academic

institutions," many of them overrun with overcompensated, unionized government employees.

Boost Head Start enrollment by 14.7 million. In 2010, a report by the Department of Health and Human Services found "the benefits of access to Head Start at age four are largely absent by 1st grade for the program population as a whole." In other words, the government has wasted \$150 billion on Head Start since 1965, and now liberals want to waste another \$113 billion.

Hire 1.93 million firefighters, 1.75 million teachers or 1.65 million police officers this year. Aren't government payrolls bloated enough? How will taxpayers finance the salaries and fringe benefits in subsequent years? How will they afford the additional pension and retiree-health-care costs? So lazy is this argument that the center doesn't even try to justify this massive hiring of economically unproductive, union-dues-paying public employees.

Equip 67.8 million houses for wind power or 25.4 million for solar power. And in whose backyard would the center put the wildly unpopular farms of giant wind turbines and huge arrays of solar panels to provide the juice?

If it is in the nation's best interest to end the war in Afghanistan, how about not borrowing the \$113 billion to squander it elsewhere?