



Other Comments

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### Budget Betrayal

Let's save money by spending less. Most families realize that they can't live indefinitely on borrowed money and would be delighted if the government joined them in the real world of tough spending choices.

However, Congress has shown no sign of departing from the status quo. Spending bills continue to grow faster than the rate of inflation as members still earmark funds for special projects for parochial interests. The Agriculture Department bill [passed by the Senate], included a 15% spending increase over the previous year's bill, which itself was a 21% spending increase over the preceding year. In today's economy, such spending increases make Americans realize that the political class isn't even close to getting it.

Congressional leaders have been using apocalyptic rhetoric about angry "mobs" "un-American" protestors and "evil-mongers" at town halls because they know that voter concerns about spending may not only derail the "public option" in health care reform but could turn into a referendum on our real problems--our crushing burden of government and the politicians who defend the status quo. For the sake of future generations, such a referendum couldn't come soon enough.

--Senator Tom Coburn (R-Okla.), *Wall Street Journal*

### Art of the Deal

The *Washington Times* reports that the National Endowment for the Arts recently held a conference call with artists and arts organizations. An NEA spokesman encouraged the artists to use their artistic skills to promote President Obama's health care reform and other efforts. Which they did with public statements--within 48 hours.

Not coincidentally, these same artists had already received \$2 million in taxpayers' money. When asked, the NEA denied it orchestrated the call. When shown a copy of the call announcement and statements made on the call, the NEA clammed up.

There was a time when artists saw themselves as part of the counterculture, challenging the powers that be. But why would some artists challenge the government when it's easier to be paid to support it?

--Merrill Matthews, Institute for Policy Innovation

### Green With Envy?

Spain has been held up as a green-jobs success story, the example of what a green economy should look like. [Yet] a study led by Gabriel Calzada of King Juan Carlos University showed that each new "green job" came at the expense of two others in the private sector.

After Spain's decade-long effort, Ambrose Evans-Pritchard of the U.K. *Telegraph* notes: "Spain is sliding into a full-blown economic depression with unemployment approaching levels not seen since the Second Republic of the 1930s" Unemployment, including thousands of "green" workers, hit 18.5% in July.

Spain's failure with renewable energy should give everyone pause. Even after \$43 billion in subsidies, solar energy still accounts for less than 1% of Spain's total electric output. Spain has also embraced wind power, but clearly the wind is not at its back.

Since Al Gore released his feature-length cartoon, *An Inconvenient Truth*, in 2006, the Earth has cooled about 0.74 degree Fahrenheit, almost the same amount that the UN's climate panel claims was gained in the entire 20th Century.

--Investor's Business Daily



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- [Rating Agencies? Still Subprime](#)
- [Restaurants: Go, Consider, Stop](#)

■ [Other Comments](#)

■ [Forbes Magazine November 2, 2009](#)

### Empty Talk

Despite damning revelations about Iran's continued duplicity on the nuclear issue, the Obama Administration remains wedded to engaging Iran, which has broken numerous attempts at engagement in the past. Press Secretary Robert Gibbs, responding to criticism of the Obama Administration's plans to start talks with Iran, defensively argued that the Bush Administration had refused to talk to Iran and stated "It resulted in a whole lot of nothing." This statement is factually inaccurate. It promotes the misconception that the Bush Administration made no effort to resolve the Iran nuclear issue through negotiations.

Contrary to Gibbs' glib remark, there were more attempts to engage Iran during the Administration of George W. Bush than during any other Administration. The Middle East Forum documented 28 separate meetings that involved direct or indirect contacts between Bush Administration and Iranian officials.

--Heritage Foundation



"Touché."

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### Diagnosis: Disaster in the Making

Americans are anxious about the expensive health care bill being debated in Washington, and not just because it may affect their

current health coverage. They know that soaring government spending is getting the nation hugely into debt and that many current programs are badly mismanaged. Would a new health care program be run any better than the many failed and misguided programs already on the books?

Fraud is rife throughout the government's array of 1,800 different subsidy programs, including health programs. For Medicare and Medicaid, as much as 20% of spending disappears into a black hole of improper payments, according to Malcolm Sparrow of Harvard University. That amounts to more than \$100 billion of annual health spending being essentially flushed down the drain.

Here's one egregious example: Over four years ending in 2008, a high school dropout in Miami with a laptop computer was able to single-handedly cheat Medicare out of \$105 million by electronically submitting 140,000 fraudulent claims for equipment and services. With that sort of abuse endemic in federal health programs, do we really want to expand them further?

--Chris Edwards, Cato Institute, *Philadelphia Inquirer*

### **Spare Me**

[It's a bad week for] staying on task, after 16 Polk County, Fla., drug investigators who raided a home in search of drugs were caught on a security camera playing the suspect's Wii Bowling for nine straight hours.

--*The Week*