

**Republican Perspective**  
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**FISCAL IRRESPONSIBILITY**

*“The Tea Party outrage over health-care reform, deficit spending and entitlements run amok is no fringe concern.” Juan Williams, journalist*

For those individuals that believe that political bi-partisanship is dead, look no further than the federal budget deficit. Republicans and Democrats have spent like drunken sailors in an unsavory bar. Don't look for any belt tightening anytime soon. Federal government funding originates in the House of Representatives. Prolific spending is in the DNA of Democrats, Social Democrats and Progressives.

Not that Republicans are much better. Republicans used to be the party for fiscal responsibility. Such responsibility evaporated when they controlled the power of the purse. The opinion firms Global Strategy Group and North Star Opinion Research recently released a poll showing that both Democrat and Republican voters are very concerned about the federal debt.

More than three in four voters (77%) want Congress to increase focus on the debt. This holds true across party lines, including 74% of Democrats, 82% of independent voters, and 75% of Republicans. Don't expect either party to listen as spending tax dollars is easier than being prudent fiscal stewards.

Listen they did not as seen by the 2019 Omnibus Appropriations Bill ending the government shutdown. All the headlines covering the bill focused upon the \$1.3 billion in funding for the border wall. But that's only one provision in a 1196-page, \$396 billion bill filled with foolish provisions. The summary document put out by the Senate Appropriations Committee has the word “increase” in it 45 times. The word “decrease” is only mentioned once.

Speaker Pelosi's “New Rules” for the 116th Congress were scrapped for the Appropriations Bill. Her rules: “Require major bill text to be available for 72 hours before the bill can proceed to the House Floor for a vote.” Congress was required to read and vote on this bill in 24 hours. We know members of Congress are the smartest people in the world. All knowing regardless of topic, 24 hours is more than enough.

Here are a few items in the Appropriations Bill:

- a \$8 billion increase in the Overseas Contingency Operations Fund (OCO) within the State Department. The OCO was created due to the 9/11 attacks. If the State Department needs this money for defending the country, it should be part of the

budget caps. Some fiscal watchdogs believe this is nothing more than an off-the-books slush fund. A Government Accountability Office report found that \$20 to \$30 billion of annual OCO funding – nearly half of all OCO spending in some years – was actually for activities that will endure beyond the “contingency” operations.

- \$2.5 billion for the Capital Investment Grant program which typically uses taxpayer funds to subsidize transit systems. If you're a resident of Tonopah, Nevada why should your tax dollars subsidize riders of BART, New York, Chicago and Washington, D.C. subways?
- \$5 million increase to support former Presidents. Really? The fact that we continue to subsidize their post-presidential lives as we cross \$20 trillion in debt is galling. As Senator Ernst (R-IA) said: “The reality is that post-presidential life already provides fruitful opportunities on its own, with former presidents raking in tens of millions of dollars from book deals, speaking engagements, and more.” Carter, Bush and Obama would serve the country well by refusing the extra support.

Even though the Federal Reserve may pause on its “normalization” of interest rates, the federal government will soon be spending more money on servicing the interest on our national debt than on vital programs. In fiscal year 2018, the Peterson Foundation reports that the federal government already spent more on interest than it did on budget areas such as veterans' benefits, transportation, and administration of justice.

The Peterson Foundation highlights federal programs that will be affected in the future:

- In fiscal year 2019, interest will be greater than the amount spent on income security — a category that includes programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Supplemental Security Income, and unemployment compensation.
- According to projections from the Urban Institute, in fiscal year 2020, interest payments will exceed the amount that the federal government spends on children.
- In fiscal year 2021, interest will surpass the combined amount spent on Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program, and subsidies for the purchase of health insurance under Obamacare.
- In fiscal year 2022, interest spending will exceed all mandatory spending other than that for Social Security and the major health care programs. That budget category, known as “other mandatory” spending, includes programs for income security, military retirement, and agriculture.
- In fiscal year 2023, the federal government will spend more on interest than defense.

One certainty, there will be no Democrat 2020 presidential candidate running on fiscal responsibility.