

An Open Letter to Congressman John Boehner

In a recent e-mail, Congressman John Boehner tried to make a case for Republican policy. His letter was too long for this venue, so I've excerpted and engaged its main points.

JB: "Introduced in September after months of listening and engaging the American people, our Pledge [to America] outlines a series of steps that can be taken immediately to address top concerns. These include:

- o "Creating Jobs: Rapid growth of government has crowded out the private sector and left small businesses frozen with uncertainty."

Reality: Recent government expansion has been mainly in defense, unemployment assistance, and bank bailouts, none of which "crowds out" private enterprise. Boehner's approach to creating jobs focuses narrowly on tax cuts for corporations and the rich, which do nothing to spur broad demand, the real driver of production and hiring.

JB: o "Cutting Spending: We must do away with the notion that we can tax, spend, and borrow our way to prosperity. We need to cut spending significantly."

Reality: Spending and borrowing are precisely the tools government needs to boost income and demand, and thus spur recovery; and tax rates are lower than in more than half a century. Yes, raising taxes on most people right now would be unwise. However, taxing multi-millionaires, who've profited inordinately from the Bush-era "robber baron" system that's failed most others, is not "soaking the rich," but simply requiring them to pay their fair share. Americans overwhelmingly oppose dismantling entitlements, and any notion that the budget can be balanced just by cutting minor expenditures, without increasing revenues, is beyond even "fuzzy" math.

JB: o "Repealing and Replacing The Job-Destroying Health Care Law: [T]he American people continue to squarely oppose ObamaCare's government takeover of health care, with its higher costs, higher taxes, job-destroying mandates, and Medicare cuts to pay for a massive new entitlement."

Reality: First, "ObamaCare" doesn't destroy jobs. It actually opens them to those who need them, by allowing people to retire who previously couldn't afford to do so (under impossible "seniors' choices" health insurance options). Second, 60% of opposition to the law is not because it does too much, but because it doesn't do enough. Third, the plan doesn't take over health care; it simply curbs abuse by insurers. Fourth, Congressional Budget Office figures show the plan doesn't raise costs, but actually reduces them overall. Fifth, the part of Medicare that's been trimmed is *fraud*.

JB: o "Our Pledge contains plans to make every bill publicly available online for three days before Congress votes. We'll also require that every bill contain a clause citing where in the Constitution Congress is given the power to pass it."

Reality: House leadership's violation of both these provisions shows the "Pledge" is just empty rhetoric.

JB: o "A Strong National Defense: Our agenda contains a plan to keep our nation secure at home and abroad – including passing clean troop funding bills, keeping terrorists off American soil, and securing our borders."

Reality: The effect of the rest of the GOP agenda is ultimately to shortchange infrastructure, education, and research, to gut Medicare, Social Security, food safety, and regulation where preoccupation with profit works against the public interest. Cutting any of these compromises future security and prosperity.

But isn't deficit reduction worth it? Guess again: Republicans are redirecting any savings to welfare for the wealthy—the one cut they refuse to make.

Boehner's misleading assumptions and bogus reasoning are a formula for disaster. He doesn't even get what he calls "the people's priorities" straight. Reality:

1. More than 70% say *jobs* are absolutely first priority.
2. Most Americans agree banks are now dangerously unregulated.
3. Deficit spending is problematic, but currently vital to address unemployment.
4. The debt ceiling isn't yet on most Americans' radar; but if it isn't raised, it'll become front-page in a hurry—though too late to avert economic calamity.

This is serious business, Mr. Boehner. Get real.