

As the impasse over the fiscal cliff enters week six, and time to work out a deal is quickly running short, unfortunately there is little sign of a breakthrough. It really should not surprise anyone that the current impasse would deadlock an already divided government built around starkly different approaches to dealing with our nation's looming budget disaster. Even more alarming, one side doesn't appear to believe there is a problem.

Like the reality TV show, *Intervention*, the president and his followers in Congress are addicted to spending and will not budge unless forced to do so. It has been said that in order to overcome an addiction a person has to first reach rock bottom. What we are witnessing right now is a White House that chooses to ignore the cause of Washington's \$16 trillion debt and trillion dollar annual deficits – overspending. Any attempt by conservatives to seriously address the dilemma is cast as mean-spirited and contrary to the will of a majority of Americans. Is the president really willing to lead us all the way to rock bottom?

For more than a month, President Obama has taken the immovable position that an \$85 billion annual increase in job-killing taxes (enough to fund the government for about two weeks) and even more stimulus spending is all that's needed to solve a looming budget crisis that threatens to undermine the solvency of the federal government and places Social Security and Medicare in mortal danger. He is not just proposing kicking the can down the road; he wants to punt it out of the stadium and into the parking lot.

In contrast, Speaker Boehner has offered up a plan that generates an equal amount of new revenue through closing tax loopholes for higher income Americans – a plan supported by the president himself last year but rejected without a second thought now in order to score political points.

To be frank, for the president, the tax issue is a red herring. The real reason the president refuses to deal is Speaker Boehner's insistence that any agreement must also include spending cuts – a necessary step that is supported by President Clinton's former White House chief of staff, Erskine Bowles. Our plan – the concept of which is based upon testimony delivered to Congress by Mr. Bowles during last summer's budget negotiations – includes \$900 billion in mandatory spending reductions (the largest and fastest growing portion of the federal budget) and another \$300 billion in discretionary spending cuts in addition to the spending reductions enacted in the 2011 Budget Control Act.

There is no illusion about a quick solution to the budget crisis our government faces. But it cannot be solved through delay tactics and distractions. Speaker Boehner has offered a balanced plan of new revenues plus spending cuts. Reforming the onerous and unfair tax code is part of our plan as well as taking concrete steps to save Social Security and Medicare from bankruptcy. Similar reforms were embraced by President Obama's own National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform in 2010 and summarily ignored by the White House.

Speaker Boehner has signaled the president that we are prepared to work through Christmas and New Year to hammer out a final agreement. Mr. President, the next move is yours'.

50-Year-Old Dream Comes True:

On December 7, I joined VA Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, Steve Muro; Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs, Retired Rear Admiral Clyde Marsh and other officials in dedicating the long-awaited Alabama State Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Spanish Fort.

The Alabama State Veterans Cemetery is the first South Alabama cemetery solely dedicated to our veterans since the Mobile National Cemetery, which was established at end of the Civil War in 1865, closed to interments in 1962. For a half century South Alabama veterans have had to seek burial arrangements in northern Alabama or out of state.

In May 2009, Governor Bob Riley signed legislation into law creating Alabama's first state veterans cemetery on 120 acres of land secured near Spanish Fort in Baldwin County. Last August, the VA approved a \$7,015,564 grant to build the Alabama State Veterans Memorial Cemetery. The new state cemetery will officially open to veteran burials in the spring of 2013.

New Baldwin County Office:

Beginning December 17, my Baldwin County Congressional Office will have a new address. It will be located at 201 East Section Street in Foley in the Baldwin County Satellite Courthouse. My new office also has a new phone number, 251-972-8545. The relocation allows my office to

save money while being closer to other local government offices for your convenience.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.

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