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Grading the Democrats

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Posted 04/02/2007 ET
Updated 04/02/2007 ET

After three months in control of Congress, it is time to grade the Democrats on how they have used their new majority on behalf of taxpayers. Some voters turned to Democrats last November because Republicans in the last few years had done a poor job of cutting spending and waste, making temporary tax cuts permanent and reforming entitlements. House Democrats had promised to be more fiscally responsible. How have they performed so far?

The emergency Iraq war spending bill was narrowly passed last week by House Democrats, with 99% of Republicans opposed. The measure hamstrings our commander in chief and generals in the field with artificial deadlines and conditions, which alone made it unacceptable to me. Worse than that, Democrat leaders took the original $100 billion supplemental for wartime expenses and added more than $20 billion in pork to buy the votes of wavering Democrats.

For instance, $25 million was added for spinach farm relief in the district of one so-called moderate Democrat in California. He claimed that this was appropriate for an emergency wartime bill because the troops in the field would no longer be worried about the folks back home eating contaminated spinach.

Representatives of peanut growers in Georgia held out for $75 million of taxpayer money. Although their vote went for peanuts, it was not peanuts to the American taxpayer. For any party in control of the U.S. House, much less one that campaigned on its claim to be more fiscally responsible, this shameful buying and selling of votes on a grand scale in a measure dealing with national security merits an "F."

As for making temporary tax cuts permanent, the Democrat budget resolution just passed out of budget committee makes it clear that they have abandoned any notion of making the current temporary tax cuts permanent. With all the Bush tax cuts slated to expire, the resulting tax burden will amount to the largest tax increase in American history.

Even the most popular tax middle-class relief measures, such as ending the marriage tax penalty, are now scheduled to expire in a few short years. Other taxes such as the death tax, income tax, and capital gains tax will also go up dramatically under Democrat leadership. The resulting tax hikes will amount to $3,000 in higher taxes for the average Colorado family of four. This performance

also rates an "F."

As for entitlement reform, Democrats continue the silence they began when President Bush sincerely tried to help our children and grandchildren by at least beginning a dialogue on entitlements. The Democrats' inexplicable silence may mean that they are congenitally unable to admit that entitlement programs may contain flaws, but for now let us charitably say this merits an "Incomplete."

In stark contrast to the Democrats, the conservative caucus of the Republican House members, the Republican Study Committee, has just unveiled a taxpayer bill of rights. The four essential elements of the taxpayer bill of rights are the right to have a federal government that does not grow beyond the rate of the underlying economy, the right that contributors to Social Security will not have their dollars spent elsewhere, the right to expect that the budget be balanced without raising taxes, and the right to a simpler, fairer, and more understandable tax code. I endorse each and every one of these four taxpayer rights, and will work and fight to see them become the law of the land.

Additionally, in contrast to the Democrats, House Republicans have proposed a budget that will balance by 2012 without raising taxes. With Tax Day fast approaching, the American people need and deserve a Congress that stands up for the rights of taxpayers. This will earn an "A" on everyone's report card.

Mr. Lamborn, a Republican, represents Colorado's 5th Congressional District.