

Congressman Alan Grayson
March 11, 2009
House Budget Committee
The President's Fiscal Year 2010 Budget Testimony

Good morning Chairman Spratt, Ranking Member Ryan, and Members of the Committee. It is an honor to address you and testify on behalf of programs and initiatives within President Obama's budget targeted at addressing waste, fraud and abuse in the federal government and meeting the human needs of my constituents and our nation.

I am, however, troubled by the \$250 billion contingent fund set aside by the President to assist with further troubled asset relief.

Mr. Chairman, the United States taxpayers have made a tremendous sacrifice in these times of economic hardship to bailout the financial industry TWICE already. Bad banks must be held accountable for their incompetence, or we will all go broke.

I can no longer sit back and watch our constituents be exploited by failed banks—dangling desperately-needed access to capital and credit over the heads of small businesses and individuals in order to get Uncle Sam to hand them a blank check.

I realize that the \$250 billion is not a direct request for funds; however, it represents the potential of another bad bank bailout, and for me that is unacceptable.

Mr. Chairman, the President must be applauded for making a serious effort to address waste, fraud and abuse in the defense and health accounts. This budget has eliminated costly, ineffective programs that do not work and increases funds for programs that do.

But we must go beyond reducing funds for individual programs. We have to reform the procurement process, by emphasizing cost in source selection, and by insisting that contractors pay a share of cost overruns that they cause.

Cutting these wasteful programs and changing the way that the Government spends money will save the American taxpayer billions of dollars, and redirect our energy and attention to programs serving the needy.

Mr. Chairman, I am also glad to see the cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are finally exposed in the budget process.

Now is the time to be completely transparent and accountable for the BILLIONS of dollars we are spending in Iraq and Afghanistan, at a time when our needs at home are so great.

I care much more about the well being of Floridians than I do about Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds.

Mr. Chairman, the Iraq War, has cost America at least \$1.5 trillion in tax dollars. For the money we have doled out to pay for the war, we could have provided:

- 1. Health care coverage to every American without it.**

In fact, for a tiny fraction of that, we could have hired every adult Iraqi for the past six years, which would have done a lot more to rebuild Iraq than KBR ever has.

Regardless of that, I am pleased to see that the President's priorities to take care of the needs here at home.

Although I would prefer to draw our troops down immediately from Iraq and transfer those billions of dollars to domestic programs long-neglected by President Bush; I am pleased to see that President Obama will champion increases in spending for healthcare, education, and expanded benefits for our veterans, the elderly and our children.

While reducing taxes on the great majority of Americans despite this, however, I remain gravely concerned about taxes in the President's budget and overall tax policy.

Mr. Chairman, with our economy in deep recession, this does not seem a good time to raise taxes on anyone.

I would ask my colleagues to consider the times, and do our best to avoid or postpone tax increases in any way, shape or form. Thank you

Mr. Chairman, I yield to any questions the Committee may have.