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Old image of cost-cutting is out

OP-ED: Judd Gregg

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The term "budget" usually conjures up images such as setting limits in order to help individuals, families and businesses spend within their means and avoid running up unaffordable debts.

But not anymore. Under the Obama administration, a budget now means just the opposite of what one would intuitively think it means.

The budget the Obama administration has presented to the American people is a new type of budget it expands our government in unprecedented ways and presents the largest tax increase in history. It raises total spending to \$3.9 trillion in 2009, or 28 percent of gross domestic product, the highest level as a share of GDP since World War II.

In the next five years, the debt will double, and in 10 years, it will triple.

This budget creates more debt than under every president from George Washington to George W. Bush combined and makes us more dependent on China and other governments to finance our debt, threatening the value of our currency and our financial security.

The president's budget also proposes to set us on a path to nationalize the health-care system at a huge cost, and, for good measure, it throws in nationalizing the ability of people to borrow to send their kids to college. It suggests that the best way to address climate change is to create a new national sales tax on everyone's electric bills. And, at a time when millions of Americans are struggling to find jobs, it proposes taxing small businesses, our nation's engine of job growth, at a rate that could be seen as confiscatory.

In other words, the president's proposal is a massive and breathtaking document, and it should not be called a budget. Rather, it should be called a blueprint for the France-ification of America, a notebook for nationalization, or a memo for massive debt creation. But a budget, by any sense of the word, it is not.

Our economy is, of course, in a severe recession. People are worried about the value of their homes, the stability of their jobs, and their ability to pay their bills. These are serious times. It is reasonable for the government to try to pull us out of this downturn by spending and borrowing since it is the last source of significant liquidity for this economy and for stabilizing key areas such as the financial sector. However, this recession will end, and the economy will recover - we are a resilient can-do nation.

Unfortunately, this proposal offers no containment. No expenditures of any significance are presumed to be limited in their growth, much less reduced, other than spuriously claiming savings for war expenditures that were never going to occur in the years 2012-19.

No entitlement programs are addressed in regard to the obligations and debt-driving costs they generate as the baby boomers head into full retirement. Instead all we get is a massive expansion in the size of government as a percentage of GDP and higher taxes on entrepreneurs and job-creating businesses. It is as if someone down in the basement of the White House has said, "Let's use this time when everyone generally agrees we need to spend to turn around this economy as a chance to lock in spending and the expansion of the government for as far as the eye can see."

We, in Congress, want to work with the president to get the American economy back on track - from fixing the housing sector, to reforming the financial markets, to helping every American receive high-quality, affordable health care. And together, we can craft a budget that would reduce the deficit over time to at least 2 percent of GDP and would reduce the percentage of publicly held debt back to 40 percent of GDP once this economic downturn is over.

But the Obama administration's proposal is not a budget that the rest of America would recognize as a document for living within one's means. It simply spends too much, taxes too much and borrows too much. It is a game plan for an explosive expansion of the size and intrusiveness of the national government based on a belief that bureaucrats can more effectively manage large segments of our economy and our daily lives than the private sector or the individual.

Ultimately, this path will result in a massive price tag that mortgages our children's future and threatens to bankrupt our nation.

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