



U.S. Rep. Tom Marino, PA-10

OP-ED

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MARINO: DIRE FINANCIAL SITUATION LEAVES NO ROOM FOR IDEOLOGY

Our country is facing a crisis right now – and it’s not just about our \$14.5 trillion national debt, a record-high national deficit, or the impasse over the looming debt ceiling situation.

We are without a true leader in the White House at a time when we need one most, and that deficiency is overshadowing all others.

Republicans and Democrats will not be able to work together, make difficult decisions and lead our nation out of this financial abyss until we have a president who is willing to remove the ideological sunglasses and view the situation realistically.

Fourteen million people are out of work. Those fortunate enough to have jobs fear they are one bad economic forecast away from the unemployment line. Small business, which has created 64 percent of all new jobs in the last 15 years, is stymied by the threat of higher taxes and increased government regulations, spending and debt.

President Obama believes raising the debt ceiling without substantial cuts in government spending is the way to go.

History has proven otherwise.

The \$800 billion stimulus did not create jobs, did not convey a sense of financial security for the middle class, nor provide an impetus for small business to invest and expand. A bloated federal government squeezes out private investment. Tax increases thwart business expansion, stifle job creation and lead to deeper cuts in employment.

It's time for the president to put reality before his vision of what a perfect society should look like.

We need a leader who has the courage to make difficult, but necessary, decisions; the maturity to embrace his circumstances; and the humility to accept reality and stop clinging to a cherished ideology.

We need a leader who will allay the worries of our most vulnerable: senior citizens and the disabled who survive on Social Security, and the members of our military who are fighting to protect us. Instead, he has preyed upon their fears, using them as pawns in his Chicago-style, game of politics.

This is unacceptable and disappointing.

It is sad that President Obama, who rode the mantra of hope and change to the Oval Office, offers neither at this critical crossroads. He conveys a sense of hopelessness and fear, and stubbornly refuses to change his own direction to meet the needs of the nation.

A true leader does not walk away from his responsibilities when the going gets tough. A true leader does not try to get his way by scaring people. A true leader does not insult citizens by acting as though they are not smart enough to understand the situation.

The truth is, the average American understands the severity of our economic situation all too well.

My constituents in the 10th District wake up every morning and make the difficult decisions about what expenditures to cut from the family budget. It's not easy to tell your child that you can't afford to go to an amusement park this summer, a new backpack for school, or to ask your teenager to choose a less expensive college.

Because they are making these tough choices, we owe it to them to do the same in Washington.

President Obama made it obvious that he demands compromise while offering none. He insists on tax increases and when he didn't get his way during last week's talks, he stormed out of the room, the childhood equivalent of taking your ball and going home.

To many, this gridlock may appear to be the result of a clash of two opposing political viewpoints. It may have started out that way.

But the severity of our economic crisis has surpassed philosophical differences. It now comes down to pragmatism versus idealism.

When we are in a state of prosperity, we have the luxury of basing governmental decisions on ideology: Expand government programs or downsize; increase taxes or reduce them.

But, our national debt is the equivalent of \$45,000 per person or \$127,500 per taxpayer. There is no room for ideology. Regardless of our viewpoints, our future, and that of our children and grandchildren, is in jeopardy unless we all put aside our political aspirations and get down to work in Washington.

The current fiscal crisis could turn catastrophic if we do not cut spending, reduce the size and scope of Washington, and keep taxes low.

Raising the debt ceiling is inevitable.

Raising the debt ceiling without comparable spending cuts and a balanced budget amendment is irresponsible.

President Obama is correct when he states that he did not lead us into this financial mire. But he is our leader and the American people need him to start acting like one. He promised hope and change and Americans are desperately seeking both right now.

Tom Marino