The Primary Republican Mission Is to Cut Taxes

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It was a political earthquake in 1994 when the Republicans won a majority in Congress for the first time in four decades. Three years later, there is no joy in Mudville because the mighty Republican Congress has struck out.

Republicans were elected to cut the spending, the power and the mischief of Big Government. The Republican Congress has expanded all three and increased spending by $180 billion over the last Democratic budget.

In the euphoria of early 1995, constituent groups that traveled to Washington expecting Republicans to redeem their campaign promises were reassured by Appropriations Chairman Bob Livingston: "Don't worry. All we have to do is put zeroes on the lines of those agencies in the budget and Clinton can't spend the money."

How Livingston's tune has changed! Now he tells us that Republicans must pass appropriations bills that Clinton agrees in advance to sign.

Call the roll of the mischievous agencies we expected Congress to abolish or defund and it becomes clear that we got zilch for our labors in electing a Republican Congress. Every one has been given more taxpayer funds then it received under preceding Congresses.

The National Education Association has been crowing about the 29 percent increase in funding the Republicans gave the Department of Education. Of course, it will be used to tighten federal mandates on local schools through Goals 2000, School-to-Work, bilingual education, and Title I (which a $29 million study just concluded is a failure).

The Republicans gave increased funding to all the pet liberal agencies, including the National Endowment for the Humanities (responsible for the anti-American History standards), the Legal Services Corporation, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Title X family planning, Section 8 housing, Americorps, the FDA, the EPA, and even welfare. The Republicans were equally profligate with increased funding for foreign aid and foreign giveaways, including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and even the Overseas Private Investment Corporation.

Gone are all the promises to ring down the curtain on at least three out of four departments: Education, Commerce, Energy, and Housing and Urban Development. Not only did they all get hefty increases, but the Republicans even agreed to name a federal building after Ron Brown!

That bellwether of voter disdain, the National Endowment for the Arts, was cut only one percent despite its in-your-face blasphemies and peer-panel corruption.

The Republican Congress then poured salt in the wounds of these betrayals by telling us that the budget deal was a "dream come true" and "historic" because it gave us a balanced budget.

In the first place, it's not a balanced budget; it's just a hope that future Congresses will balance the budget. Like the horizon, that hope is always receding because of the dishonest way that Congress frontloads spending increases and backloads reductions, if any.

In the second place, the Republicans don't deserve any credit for reducing the deficit because the reduction didn't result from any cuts in Big Government. The deficit declined because of steadily shrinking defense budgets and because Clinton's 1993 tax increase on the so-called "rich" brought in so much more revenue than his than government accountants had forecast.

The Republican leadership should never have made a balanced budget their primary goal. It has boomeranged on them by giving Clinton the "cover" to demand higher spending, just as the Line Item Veto mistake has given Clinton a political tool to kill appropriations in the districts of Congressmen who don't play his game.

The 1998 Republican budget includes a direct attack against our most powerful voting constituency, senior citizens. The budget deal wrote into law a Clintonian provision that effectively forbids seniors from spending their own money to get health care outside of what the Medicare bureaucrats approve.

At the very least, Republicans should repeal Clinton's 1993 tax increase, which every single Republican voted against. How is it possible that the minority Republicans in the preceding Congress had more fiscal backbone than the majority Republicans this year?

The only talk we hear about taxes from Republican spokesmen is flat tax versus sales tax and "reforming" the Internal Revenue Service. Unless we actually cut taxes, the agony of changing to a new system is not worth the effort.

The Republican Congress has put Big Government on life support and is nursing it to back to health. Although we all know that entitlements are the chief cause of the burgeoning budgets, the Republicans even created a brand new Ted Kennedy-style entitlement called KidCare at a startup cost of $24 billion in the first five years.

It is a moral and political outrage that the average family is now paying 29% of its income in federal taxes. The only thing we want to hear from this Republican 105th Congress is what it is going to do to reduce our tax burden and defund the mischievous liberal programs.