

The Obama economy and failed stimulus

By: Congressman Tim Huelskamp

Three years ago this month, Congressional Democrats and President Obama signed a \$787 billion "stimulus" into law. The American people were told this massive spending would result in significant job creation and economic turnaround. Chief among the promises was a commitment that unemployment would never go above 8 percent.

Not only has unemployment remained above 8 percent every single month since the stimulus became law 36 months ago, but the outlooks for this year and next are no better. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) issued its 2012 economic forecast, and the nation's unemployment rate is expected to remain above 8 percent this year and to exceed 9 percent again next year!

On top of this, the number of long-term unemployed (people without a job for 26 weeks or more) has more than doubled in the past three years and all but seven states have high unemployment rates.

This past week I had the opportunity to question the Director of the CBO when he came before the Budget Committee. I asked him specifically about the impact of the stimulus on the economy, and he said that while there may have been some short-term benefits, "unless there are offsetting changes made that pay off the extra debt that was incurred, the economy will be worse off as a result."

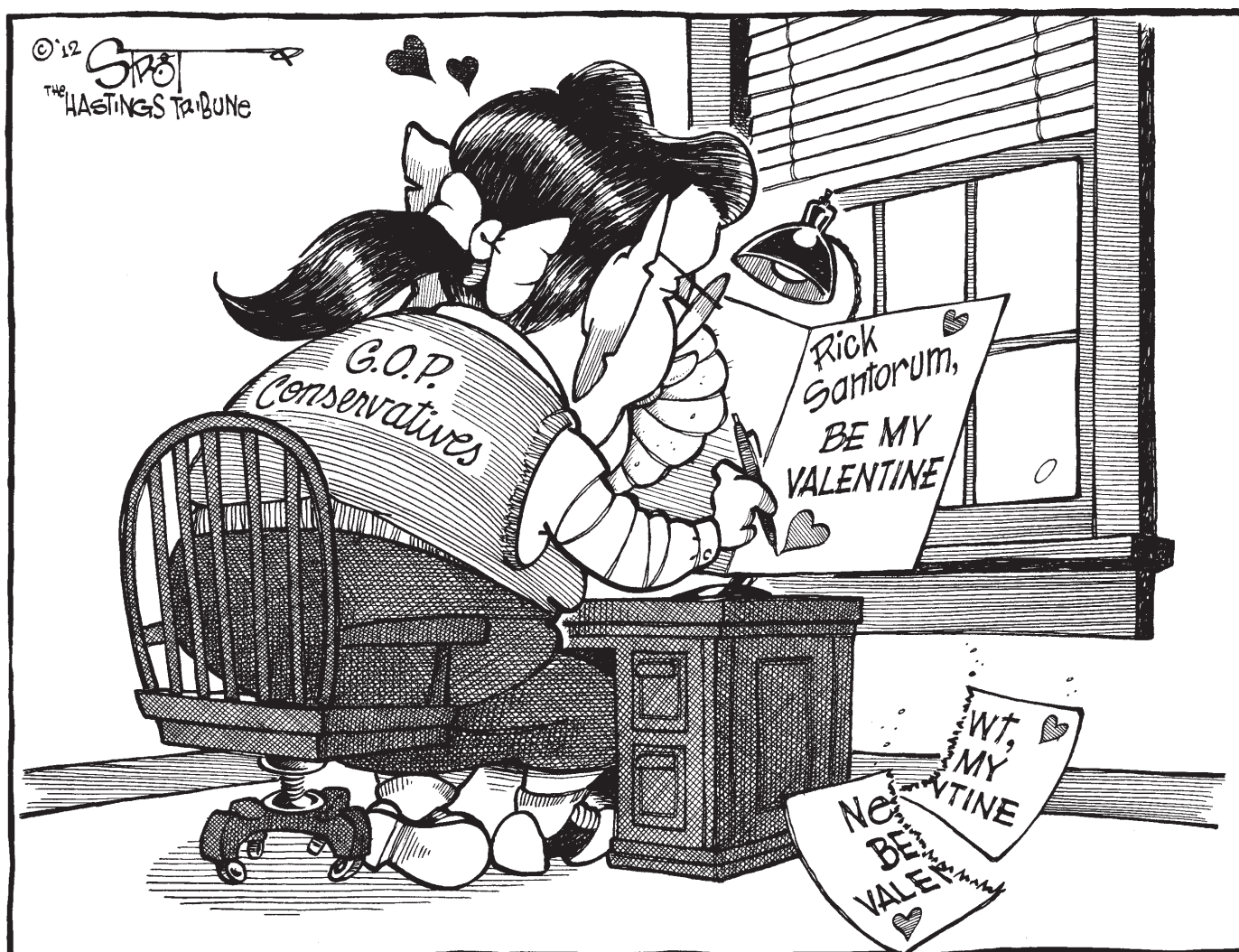
So, not only was there a lack of long-term or meaningful job growth, but America's debt load increased because of it.

Three years ago, President Obama said he should be held accountable for the state of the economy, stating that if the job is not done, "there's going to be a one-term proposition." He probably hoped that he would be able to take credit for a recovered economy rather than the actual failed one, but nonetheless, he set the standard. Certainly President Obama cannot be blamed for the condition of the economy in January 2009, but he should be for the condition in January 2012.

On top of the lackluster employment numbers is the poor state of America's fiscal health. Since the day President Obama took office, federal debt has increased by 43 percent, from \$10.6 trillion to \$15.2 trillion. The country has run a trillion-dollar deficit every single year of his Presidency. And, federal spending will account for 23.2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), compared to the 21.0 percent average over the past 40 years. All of these factors have a destructive impact on our economy.

Another experiment with massive government spending did not stimulate the economy and job creation three years ago. Years of massive government spending and overregulation are the reason that our economy cannot recover today. The burden of \$15.2 trillion in debt (and another \$1.2 trillion this year) along with annual trillion-dollar deficits depress our economy, discourage our small businesses, and distress our taxpayers.

America's economic conditions and Washington's fiscal state certainly influence one another. If the President is truly concerned with getting America's economy rolling again and getting the more than 21 million unemployed people back to work, then he should be concerned with the arena in which he can exercise the most influence: government spending. When the President submits his budget next week, it should be one geared toward reducing spending, not repeating a failed government boondoggle.



The chore of balancing the checkbook

Anyone who knows me, knows I'm no bookkeeper. At least not for myself. Oh, I make a stab at reconciling my checkbook each month. But truthfully, as long as the bank says I have more money than I say I have, I think, "close enough."

But I am trustworthy. That's why I've been made treasurer of three different groups I'm involved with. And when it comes to someone else's money I make sure I balance the account, to the penny, every month.

I'll never forget the time I asked a highly respected bank teller to help me with my personal account. She asked to see my check register. I explained that I "rounded up" my entries. You know if I wrote a check for \$5.68, I would enter \$6. You could see the look of horror and disbelief in her eyes.

Why would you do something like that?" she asked.

I gave her what I thought was a perfectly logical answer. "I thought it would be an easy way to save a little money."

So you can imagine her shock when, several years ago, I came into her bank to sign the signatory card for the local

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



high school alumni association. "They made YOU the treasurer?" she asked.

Beaming with pride, I answered, "Don't worry. I manage other people's money better than I do my own."

All of this is to say that after this last week I feel like I could pass a CPA test. (No offense to my friends who are real CPAs). I am the treasurer of The Haven, the non-profit organization on whose board Jim and I sit. It is annual report time and not only did I get that done, but I completed spread sheets on our last four years of operation. Ask me something. I can tell you the average amount of our monthly utility bills; or how much we spent on plumbing repairs; or insurance. I don't know if we will ever really need this information, but, by golly, I have it, if we do.

-ob-

When a catalog says, "Some assembly required" in the fine print: believe it.

I ordered a cute little mini-dresser for the bathroom. When it arrived, I was appalled to find about a jillion pieces in the box.

That's when I called upon son James. He is so good to me. In no time at all he had Tab A in Slot B and all the pieces fit together perfectly, with none left over.

-ob-

This is the week of Valentine's Day. One of my favorite holidays because my husband is such a romantic. My big red heart on the side of our barn is lit up for all the world to see. And I don't mind sharing my heart with all the other "girls" in town. I don't even mind if their husbands/boyfriends tell them THEY are the ones who put up the heart and "It's just for you, baby, just for you." Really, I don't.

Because, like the song says, "All we need is love." Love for each other. Love for our fellow man.

There's another quote that is pretty good, too. It's about faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Stretch your grocery dollar in hard economic times

As many Americans continue to face economic hard times, there is no reason to compromise the welfare of your family's diet. The cost of eating healthy hasn't changed as much as some less-healthy alternatives. It does require strategic shopping however.

Helping Americans learn how to stretch their grocery dollars with healthy, nutritious food is the theme of Farm Bureau's Food Check-Out Week, Feb. 19-25. America's farmers and ranchers are committed to producing safe, healthy and abundant food. And they share a common concern with consumers when it comes to putting nutritious meals on the table while sticking to a tight budget.

Recent U.S. Department of Agriculture food price data show that prices for unprepared, readily available fresh fruits and vegetables have remained stable relative to dessert and snack foods, such as chips, ice cream and cola. Translation – the price of a healthier diet has not changed compared to an unhealthy diet.

Farm Bureau's Food Check-Out Week is aimed at helping American

Insight

John Schlageck



consumers learn how to shop wisely while putting nutritious meals on the table with fewer dollars.

Learning to use your grocery dollars wisely helps ensure nutrition isn't neglected. Fruits and vegetables – along with whole grains, low-fat dairy products, lean meats, fish, beans, eggs and nuts – are an important part of a healthy diet.

Buying fresh produce when it's in season and costs less, while buying frozen fruits and vegetables when they're not in season, is a smart way to stretch that dollar.

Consumers in Kansas and across this country share in this wealth of food products every time they step foot in their favorite supermarket. Yes, today's shopper is fortunate to reap the benefits

provided by America's farmers and ranchers.

Crop and livestock producers are proud of their profession. Nowhere is this more visible than the Midwest and our home state of Kansas in particular.

Members of this profession take great pride in producing the cleanest, most abundant crops including wheat, corn, milo and soybeans. In addition, Kansas ranchers produce some of the best cattle, hogs and sheep.

Kansans are also proud that Food Check-out Week is an idea that originated with Kansas Farm Bureau in 1997 and has since gone national. Neosho County Farm Bureau member Linda Reinhart, former chair of the Kansas committee of Farm Bureau Women and the American Farm Bureau Women's committee, thought the concept was important and saw it through to completion.

The story of the American farmer and rancher is truly a success story. Our producers are the most productive in the world. Remember to help celebrate this story and the healthiest, safest food anywhere on the planet Feb. 19-25.



Thumbs up to the Norton Community High School art students and their instructor Vicki Robison for a job well done at the Logan art show. It is amazing to see how many talented young people we have in our school system. The arts programs have been and always should be a very important part of the Norton School's curriculum. Emailed in.

Call Dana for your next ad. 877-3361!

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