



"I MISS THE HALLOWEENS WHEN THE KIDS WOULD JUST EGG THE HOUSE"

Facing The Biggest Issue

BY ROBERT B. REICH
Tribune Media Services

As we go into the final days of a dismal presidential campaign where too many issues have been fudged or eluded — and the media only want to talk about who's up and who's down — the biggest issue on which the candidates have given us the clearest choice is whether the rich should pay more in taxes.

President Obama says emphatically yes. He proposes ending the Bush tax cut for people earning more than \$250,000 a year, and requiring the rich to pay at least 30 percent of their incomes over \$1 million, the so-called "Buffett Rule."

Mitt Romney says emphatically no. He proposes cutting tax rates by 20 percent, which would result in a much larger tax reduction for the rich than for anyone else. He also wants to extend the Bush tax cut for the wealthy, and reduce or eliminate taxes on dividends and capital gains.

Romney says he'll close loopholes and eliminate deductions used by the rich so that their share of total taxes remains the same as it is now, although he refuses to specify what loopholes or deductions. But even if we take him at his word, under no circumstances would he increase the amount of taxes they pay.

Obama is right. America faces a huge budget deficit. And just about everyone who's looked at how to reduce it — the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office, the bipartisan Simpson-Bowles Commission, and almost all independent economists and analysts — have come up with some combination of spending cuts and tax increases that raise revenue.

Just last Thursday, executives of more than 80 large American corporations called for tax reform that "raises revenues and reduces the deficit."

The practical question is who pays for those additional revenues. If Romney's view prevails and the rich don't pay more, everyone else has to.

That's nonsensical. The rich are far richer than they used to be, while most of the rest of us are poorer. The latest data show the top 1 percent garnering 93 percent of all the gains from the recovery so far. But median family income is 8 percent lower than it was in 2000, adjusted for inflation.

The gap has been widening for three decades. Since 1980, the top 1 percent has doubled its share of the nation's total income — from 10 percent to 20 percent. The share of the top one-tenth of 1 percent has tripled. The share of the top-most one-one hundredth of 1 percent — 16,000 families — has quadrupled. The richest 400 Americans now have more wealth than the bottom 150 million of us put together.

Meanwhile, the tax rates paid by the wealthy have

dropped precipitously.

Before 1981 the top marginal tax rate was never lower than 70 percent. Under President Dwight Eisenhower it was 93 percent. Even after taking all the deductions and tax credits available to them, the rich paid around 54 percent.

The top tax rate is now only 35 percent, and the tax on capital gains (increases in the value of investments) is only 15 percent. Since so much of what they earn is from capital gains, many of the super-rich, like Romney himself, pay 14 percent or less. That's a lower tax rate than many middle-class Americans pay.

In fact, if you add up all the taxes paid — not just on income and capital gains but also payroll taxes (which don't apply to income above \$110,100) and sales taxes — most of us are paying a higher percentage of our income in taxes than are those at the top.

So how can anyone argue against raising taxes on the rich? Easy. They say it will slow the economy because the rich are "job creators."

In the immortal words of Joe Biden, that's malarkey.

The economy did just fine during the three decades after World War II, when the top tax rate never fell below 70 percent. Average yearly economic growth was higher in those years than it's been since, when taxes on the rich have been far lower.

Bill Clinton raised taxes on the rich, and the economy did wonderfully well. George W. Bush cut them, and the economy slowed.

The real job creators are America's vast middle class, whose spending encourages businesses to expand and hire — and whose lack of spending has the opposite effect.

That's why the recovery has been painfully slow. So much income and wealth have gone to the top that the vast majority of Americans in the middle don't have the purchasing power to get the economy moving again. The rich save most of what they earn, and their savings go anywhere around the world where they can get the highest return.

It would be insane to compound the damage by raising taxes on the middle class and not on the rich.

Logic, fairness and common sense dictate that the rich pay more in taxes.

It's the key to avoiding January's fiscal cliff and coming up with a "grand bargain" on taming the budget deficit. And it's central to getting the economy back on track.

Robert B. Reich, Chancellor's Professor of Public Policy at the University of California and former U.S. Secretary of Labor, is the author of "Beyond Outrage: What has gone wrong with our economy and our democracy, and how to fix it," a Knopf release now out in paperback.



Robert REICH

YOUR LETTERS

No Change In Voting Law

Jason Gant, Pierre

South Dakota Secretary of State

Voter ID laws have been in the news across the country. This may be creating concerns among South Dakota voters.

Let me assure South Dakota voters that our law has not changed and they will be voting the same as in prior elections.

The 2003 South Dakota voter ID law states that a voter shall present one of the following photo ID's when voting: South Dakota driver's license or non-driver ID card, passport or other ID issued by the U.S. government, tribal ID, or student ID from South Dakota high school, college, university, or technical school. However, if the voter does not have an ID, they may complete an affidavit of personal identification.

The nine-year-old law which added ID requirements also removed the need to give reason for absentee voting. This more than doubled the number of absentee ballots cast in statewide elections. Voters have enjoyed having the chance to vote when it fits into their schedule.

Absentee rules and a voter ID law have provided convenience for voters while guarding against voter fraud.

I encourage all South Dakotans to vote on Tuesday, Nov. 6.

For further information, visit sdsos.gov or contact your local County Auditor's office.

A Corporate Democracy?

John Magnuson, Yankton

Is our democracy endangered by the rising political power of business corporations? It seems our employers can now legally instruct us on how we should vote. One of the presidential candidates is even heard on tape urging a group of business executives to do just that. Isn't this legally condoning a form of coercion?

This seems incredibly wrong. This is an age when corporations enjoy legal status as individuals, but unlike individuals, they have no limits to the dollar amount of campaign donations they can make to candidates. Isn't this bribery?

Corporations aren't human and sure can't be sent to prison. Corporations aren't citizens and, as shown by the outsourcing of jobs, they have no national loyalty.

OUR LETTER POLICY

The PRESS & DAKOTAN encourages its readers to write letters to the editor, and it asks that a few simple guidelines be followed.

■ Please limit letters to 300 words or less. Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.

■ In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the PRESS & DAKOTAN will accept no letters attacking private individuals or businesses.

■ Specific individuals or entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same issue.

■ Only signed letters with writer's full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted. Please mail to: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to 665-1721 or email to views@yankton.net.

alty. After our Wall Street fiasco, hardly any Wall Streeters were sent to prison, despite the huge sums of money we the people lost. Meanwhile, Wall Street banks are doing more of what they did before.

There appears to be no political backbone in either party to tackle this problem. Are the big banks so monied up and powerful that the law doesn't apply to them? Are the powerful corporations using their money to corrupt our politicians, to undermine the Constitution and to turn us into a managed democracy? What sort of influence leads us to believe that protecting ourselves from financial abuses is like socialism?

Creeping changes in our country have a name, "Inverted Totalitarianism" ("Democracy Inc." by Sheldon S. Wolin) and this is described as a process whereby democracies slowly give up personal freedoms and liberty to governments dominated by business interests often with little resistance by voters. A shrinking middle class is evidence of inverted totalitarianism, and voter apathy greases the skids.

But corporations can't vote. When you vote, please consider voting for the presidential candidate who will support the people and who will nominate Supreme Court justices favoring people over corporations. The next president will likely select at least two nominees. Please consider this carefully, and get out and vote.

THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

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OPINION | OUR VIEW

Education Funding: Words And Actions

We've written a couple of pieces during the past week examining some ballot issues and how they may impact education. We believe education is an extraordinarily important issue for our state and its future, and it deserves the attention of everyone who has an interest in that future.

But sometimes, we have to wonder if this campaign-season concern will actually have a point to it when the Legislature reconvenes.

This was alluded to during Monday night's District 18 legislative forum at Mount Marty College. While taking on an education question, Rep. Bernie Hunhoff noted that, all over the state, candidates are participating in forums just like Monday's gathering and declaring their strong support for education funding. And yet, when the rubber hits the road in Pierre, that funding sometimes turns into roadkill.

It would seem that what the people at home hear from their lawmakers (and/or the candidates) about education spending doesn't always match what really happens on the floor of the Legislature.

After all, South Dakota teacher salaries didn't sink to last in the nation by some divine plan beyond the comprehension or influence of mere humans. Someone made it happen — or at least allowed it to happen, for whatever reasons.

The cuts that education has endured the last few years have inflicted a lot of pain throughout the state, as the residents of Yankton can attest. It has stirred considerable concern about how well our schools can serve our kids and offer them a future here. And yet, the cuts are made. We understand that education is the biggest single item in the budget and we must live within our means, but education is also one of the most far-reaching and essential items supported by government.

And everyone does indeed talk about education as an investment in our future, but we continue to shortchange that investment, despite of what you hear at these forums in the fall and at the legislative coffees throughout each winter.

So what's to be done? We can ask the questions of our candidates and demand some answers, and we'll probably like what we hear. But come January, it's a different situation with other priorities.

The only reasonable answer is to never stop asking the questions. It's imperative for people to continue voicing their concerns about the state of education and the priority in which it's held in Pierre. It isn't enough to vote for the candidates who tell you what you want to hear about education during the election season. Instead, it requires vigilance and vocal support, all year round.

Otherwise, we are confronting the same cycle of promises and disappointment, the continued erosion of public education in this state and the gradual dimming of our future.

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POLITICAL LETTERS

■ All political/letters to the editor to the PRESS & DAKOTAN that fall under the "paid" advertising policy will be charged \$25 for up to 200 words, plus 15 cents per additional words above 200. As with all political advertising these must be paid in advance.

■ Deadline for these ads will be the same as all other display advertising deadlines which is determined by the day it is requested to run.

■ No paid advertising (including these) will be allowed to run on the opinion page.

■ Emailing these political letters to the editor is strongly encouraged to insure accuracy and speed.

■ Since these ads are not from an actual candidate or campaign they do not need to follow the same disclaimer policy, HOWEVER, they do need to be signed (and verified) and the ads need to be marked as, PAID ADVERTISEMENT.

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, Oct. 31, the 305th day of 2012. There are 61 days left in the year. This is Halloween.

Today's Highlight in History: On Oct. 31, 1517, Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses on the door of the Wittenberg Palace church, marking the start of the Protestant Reformation in Germany.

On this date: In 1795, English poet John Keats was born in London.

In 1864, Nevada became the 36th state.

In 1887, Nationalist Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek was born in Zhejiang Province.

In 1926, magician Harry Houdini died in Detroit of gangrene and peritonitis resulting from a ruptured appendix.

In 1941, the Navy destroyer USS Reuben James was torpedoed by a German U-boat off Iceland with the loss of some 100 lives, even though the United States had not yet entered World War II. Work was completed on the Mount Rushmore National Memorial in South Dakota, begun in 1927.

In 1959, a former U.S. Marine showed up at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow to declare he was renouncing his American citizenship so he could live in the Soviet Union. His name: Lee Harvey Oswald.

In 1961, the body of Josef Stalin was removed from Lenin's Tomb as part of the Soviet Union's "de-Stalinization" drive.

In 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson ordered a halt to all U.S. bombing of North Vietnam, saying he hoped for fruitful peace negotiations.

In 1984, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated by two Sikh security guards.

In 1992, Pope John Paul II formally proclaimed that the Roman Catholic Church had erred in condemning the astronomer Galileo for holding that the Earth was not the center of the universe.

In 1994, a Chicago-bound American Eagle ATR-72 crashed in northern Indiana, killing all 68 people aboard.

In 1999, EgyptAir Flight 990, bound from New York to Cairo, crashed off the Massachusetts coast, killing all 217 people aboard.

Ten years ago: Authorities charged the two Washington sniper suspects with murder in a Louisiana attack that came just two days after a similar slaying in Alabama. An earthquake toppled a school in San Giuliano Di Puglia, Italy, killing 27 children and a teacher.

Five years ago: Three lead defendants in the 2004 Madrid train bombings were found guilty of mass murder and other charges, but four other top suspects were convicted on lesser charges and an accused ringleader was completely acquitted in the attacks that killed 191 people. Gold traded above \$800 an ounce for the first time since 1980.

One year ago: Palestinians won their greatest international endorsement yet with full membership in UNESCO, but the move prompted the U.S. to cut off payments to the Paris-based cultural agency. The United Nations marked the world's population surpassing 7 billion.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Lee Grant is 85. Former astronaut Michael Collins is 82. Former CBS anchorman Dan Rather is 81. Folk singer Tom Paxton is 75. Actor Ron Rifkin is 73. Actress Sally Kirkland is 71. Actor David Ogden Stiers is 70. Actor Brian Doyle-Murray is 67. Actor Stephen Rea is 66. Olympic gold medal long-distance runner Frank Shorter is 65. Actress Deirdre Hall is 64. Talk show host Jane Pauley is 62. Actor Brian Stokes Mitchell is 55. Movie director Peter Jackson is 51. Rock musician Larry Mullen is 51. Actor Dermot Mulroney is 49. Rock musician Mikkey Dee (Motorhead) is 49. Rock singer-musician Johnny Marr is 49. Actor Rob Schneider is 48. Country singer Darryl Worley is 48. Actor-comedian Mike O'Malley is 47. Rap musician Adrock is 46. Songwriter Adam Schlesinger is 45. Rap performer Vanilla Ice (aka Rob Van Winkle) is 44. Rock singer Linn Berggren (Ace of Base) is 42. Reality TV host Troy Hartman is 41. Gospel singer Smokie Norful is 39. Actress Piper Perabo is 36. Actor Brian Hallisay is 34. Actor Eddie Kaye Thomas is 32. Rock musician Frank Iero (My Chemical Romance) is 31. Actor Scott Clifton is 28. Actress-singer Willow Smith is 12.

Thought for Today: "Moral indignation is in most cases two percent moral, forty-eight percent indignation, and fifty percent envy." — Vittorio De Sica, Italian movie director (1901-1974).

FROM THE BIBLE

My soul melts away from sorrow; strengthen me according to Your Word! Psalm 119:28. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

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Published Daily

Monday-Saturday

Periodicals postage paid at Yankton, South Dakota, under the act of March 3, 1979.

Weekly Dakotian established June 6, 1861. Yankton Daily Press and Dakotian established April 26, 1875.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Yankton Daily Press & Dakotian, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078.

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The Yankton Daily Press & Dakotian is a member of the Associated Press, the Inland Daily Press Association and the South Dakota Newspaper Association. The Associated Press is entitled exclusively to use of all the local news printed in this newspaper.

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