

Entitlements – Why Fix Them When You Can Demagogue Them?

☒ Is anyone really surprised that the so-called “Super Committee” in Washington didn’t come up with a compromise to cut our national debt? After all, any serious plan would have required a change to government entitlements... and we simply can’t have that!

Entitlement reform has long been considered the *third rail* of American politics. But one would think that if there ever was a time when politicians would find the sobriety, nerve, and political support to take on the major drivers of our national debt, that time would be now. The debt has just surpassed the \$15 trillion mark, exceeding our GDP and leaving each newborn U.S. citizen with a bill of roughly \$50 thousand. The insolvency dates for programs like Social Security and Medicare continue to jump forward by years at a time, yet the message from most of Washington has been clear: *We don’t care.*

Whenever a Democratic politician is asked by an interviewer their thoughts on entitlement reform, their answer typically begins with something like, “Well, we all agree that something has to be done about entitlements, **but...**” And that’s about as detailed of a solution that you’ll hear on record from any of them. The reason is that even with the widely acknowledged, catastrophic economic conditions our country is suffering from, demagoguery of entitlement programs is a political winner. It doesn’t matter that without reform, these programs will collapse under their own weight. All that matters is that any kind of proposed tampering of the system can be too easily demagogued by the opposition into a narrative of stealing from the most vulnerable in our society.

Scaring old people has long been a successful tactic for politicians, as FOX News political commentator Bob Beckel

freely admits. Beckel, a former campaign strategist for several Democratic politicians, often speaks with pride on how he helped win elections by dishonestly convincing voters (including his own family members) that if the opposition won, they would take away government entitlements from the elderly. John Kerry used the tactic in 2004, in a last ditch effort to capture the presidency from George W. Bush, and the Democratic congress killed Bush's attempts to reform Social Security during his second term. When Congressman Paul Ryan proposed a substantive entitlement reform plan in 2010, he got the same treatment with President Obama shamelessly leading the charge.

It should be noted that certain Republicans have adopted the tactic on occasion as well, when it has been convenient to do so. Newt Gingrich, in an attempt to appeal to centrist voters at the beginning of his presidential campaign, famously undercut the Ryan plan by publicly categorizing it as "right-wing social engineering". Mitt Romney even jumped on the bandwagon when he scolded presidential primary opponent Rick Perry for likening Social Security to a "ponzi scheme". Any intellectually honest person (including Romney) realizes that Social Security, in its current form, absolutely **is** a ponzi scheme. Those who get out early benefit from the system, while those who get in late are the ones who get screwed. Yet, like any opportunistic politician, Romney saw the opening and successfully rattled the nerve of Perry, who was speaking of the subject in more honest terms than anyone else.

The AARP has become the boldest, most dishonest source of anti-reform propaganda. With their aggressive commercial campaign of downright lying about proposed changes to our entitlement programs, they're playing a substantial role in ensuring insolvency for future generations of seniors to have to cope with. Any current AARP senior citizen, with any sort of conscience about the country they're leaving to their grand kids, should consider cancelling their membership.

That brings us to the latest debacle... the failure of the Super

Committee to do anything to cut our national debt. You know there's no hope when House Minority Leader, Nancy Pelosi instructs her members of the committee not to even entertain the notion of touching entitlements. They didn't need her direction. They wouldn't have considered it anyway. And afterwards, of course, we were treated to another condemnation from President Obama who chastised House Republicans for not agreeing to the *reasonable* solutions laid out by the Democrats... as if placing a band-aid on a sinking ship was somehow considered reasonable or a solution.

I would like to think that some day, there would be a consensus from Americans that the political games are no longer acceptable. I would like to think we would some day demand our elected leaders to fix the programs. But we don't do it in sufficient numbers, because so many of us cling to the false, conditioned belief that those entitlement rewards will just *always* be around, and any reform of the failed system jeopardizes that. We fear that our piece of the pie will be taken away from us before we're finished with dessert.

Sadly, I don't see that mindset changing, especially when trying to explain the details of entitlement reform in layman's terms is about as easy as me trying to explain how the internet works to my mother.

If we don't demand serious changes, they're not going to happen. Expecting our representatives to fix the problem on their own would be like counting on a drug dealer to check his customers into rehab. It just isn't going to happen, and our children are the one's paying the price for our dishonesty and cowardice.