

Memo to GOP: Make Obama Own the Mess He's Created

✘ Anybody who's thought about it for two seconds knows we don't have a taxing problem – we have a spending problem.

We borrow about 42 cents on every dollar we spend, and under President Obama we have been spending more than \$1 trillion dollars a year we don't have. That's where the borrowing comes in.

Yet almost all the talk we get from the president and from his stenographers in the media is about taxes. The wealthiest Americans need to pay their "fair share." As Meghan Clyne put it in a Wall Street Journal column, "If the U.S. Treasury received a dollar every time President Obama demanded that the rich pay their 'fair share' to eliminate our deficits, the problem might take care of itself."

If the government doesn't get spending under control – and by that I don't mean cutting the rate of *increases*, but actually cutting *spending* – the next stop on the Crazy Train we're all riding will be downtown Athens.

Yet this president doesn't have any interest in cutting spending – except, of course, for wars that we won't be fighting anyway and for the military in general. And he's getting away with his recklessness because the low-information voters, as Rush Limbaugh calls them, buy into just about anything he says – mainly because his most loyal base – the so-called mainstream media – dutifully repeat whatever he says.

What really gets me, though, is how clumsy the Republicans are. For a bunch of politicians they really stink at politics.

First, they need to pick one person to speak for the group. Right now, that person pretty much is House Speaker John Boehner. I can live with that, but just between you and me, I'd prefer someone with a little charisma taking on a president who has very little ability but a ton of charisma – at least as far as the low-information voter is concerned.

Then the GOP front man (or woman) needs to make the Republican case in language that even those low-information voters – “clueless” is the less diplomatic way to describe them – can understand. Here's what he or she might say:

“If we continue spending money we don't have, before you can say The Great Depression we will be in one, except this one will be worse than the first one.

“When interest rates go up – and they inevitably will – we will spend every penny we take in on paying off our debt. Every. Single. Penny.

“That means we won't have any money for the Army, the Navy, the Air Force or the Marines. We won't have any money for the FBI. No money for interstate highways or national parks. No money for anything except paying off the Chinese and everyone else who loaned us money.

“And this president either doesn't get it or doesn't want to get it. Since he doesn't understand anything about growing the economy, he's happy just to “spread the wealth around,” as he told Joe the Plumber. Except there won't be any wealth to spread around.

“And there's something else he wants to do: make government bigger. He will never cut spending in any serious way. He will never make a move to reform entitlements. He thinks government is the answer to everything.

“We Republicans tried to compromise. We agreed to more than \$800 billion in new taxes over the next 10 years. We thought the president’s plan was to cut \$3 in spending for every \$1 in new taxes. We compromised. He reneged.

“And all he can talk about is making the rich pay their “fair share.” Forget about raising taxes on the top 1 or 2 percent by a few percentage points. If we took 100 percent of everything they’ve got, it wouldn’t begin to get us out of the hole we’re in. That’s how irresponsible both Democrats and Republicans have been for a very long time.

“The only way out is to cut spending and then cut some more. This president won’t do it. He’s counting on you – the American people – not to understand how serious this problem is.

“Like everything else that happens here in Washington, this looks like just one more ugly, partisan political argument. This time it isn’t. This time it’s about saving America.”

Then the GOP has to make the point – one I’ve written about in this space before – that they have seen the polls and they know they will take the blame for whatever goes wrong. They know that the president will be seen as the Great Compromiser while they will be seen as obstructionists who care only about people with yachts. But under no circumstances, they need to say, will Republicans sell out the American people, no matter how much it may cost them politically.

Barack Obama has won two presidential elections with more than 50 percent of the vote. The last Democrat to do that was Franklin Roosevelt. So, my conservative friends, let’s not pretend that Mr. Obama doesn’t possess something the American people like. That’s how he got re-elected despite chronically high unemployment and chronically low economic growth.

He has blamed President Bush for the economic mess he inherited. And he got away with it. And he will blame Republicans in general if we slide into another recession, or even if the economy "merely" stagnates in his second term. Memo to GOP: Don't let him get away with it any longer. Make him own the mess he's created.