





Free Press
Viewpoint

Should more debt lead to more credit?

A perhaps little-seen news item today had Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi announcing that she and other House members will seek to raise the debt ceiling. This is a colossally irresponsible thing to do.

Allowing the federal government to incur more debt will only encourage more spending. They already voted once earlier this year to raise it to \$12.1 trillion. On Wednesday, national debt was reportedly at \$12.08 trillion, inching up toward that ceiling.

But what is this mysterious debt ceiling? Well, it’s just what it sounds like, a limit on the debt that the federal government can incur. It began in 1917 when congress passed the Second Liberty Bond Act. It was designed to allow the U.S. Treasury Department to have more freedom in managing national debt, as long as it didn’t go over \$8 billion.

When the country has a budget deficit, it is allowed to sell debt to whomever wants to buy it in order to make up the difference, and it was all supposed to be kept in check by the debt ceiling. However, each time the debt goes higher, Congress raises the ceiling to keep the country above water.

But what happens if the debt hits the ceiling? The country goes into default.

But if you keep moving the goal post, you’ll just keep moving down the field forever. Put another way, if you keep revising the limit, why have one at all. And more importantly if we keep allowing more and more debt, how we ever expect there to be less of it.

Look at it this way. If a person kept borrowing and borrowing and never paid it back, wouldn’t you stop loaning them money? Wouldn’t you tell them they’re not going to get another cent until they pay down what they’ve already borrowed? You don’t tell them you’ll just keep giving them more.

In 1917, Congress gave the federal government a limit, and they haven’t stuck to it, so Congress keeps raising the limit. In 2005, it was \$8.18 trillion. In 2008, it was \$11.3 trillion.

When will the day come when we expect our government to reduce its debt? When will we say enough is enough?

Now, nobody wants the country to go into default, but it’s time for Congress to show some tough love. It’s time for Congress to push the current administration, and all those after it, to decrease the amount of spending and increase revenue so that we don’t have to borrow so much.

This should be a non-partisan issue. It doesn’t matter how we got there, but the country is \$12.08 trillion in the hole – shouldn’t we all want it to climb out?

— Kevin Bottrell

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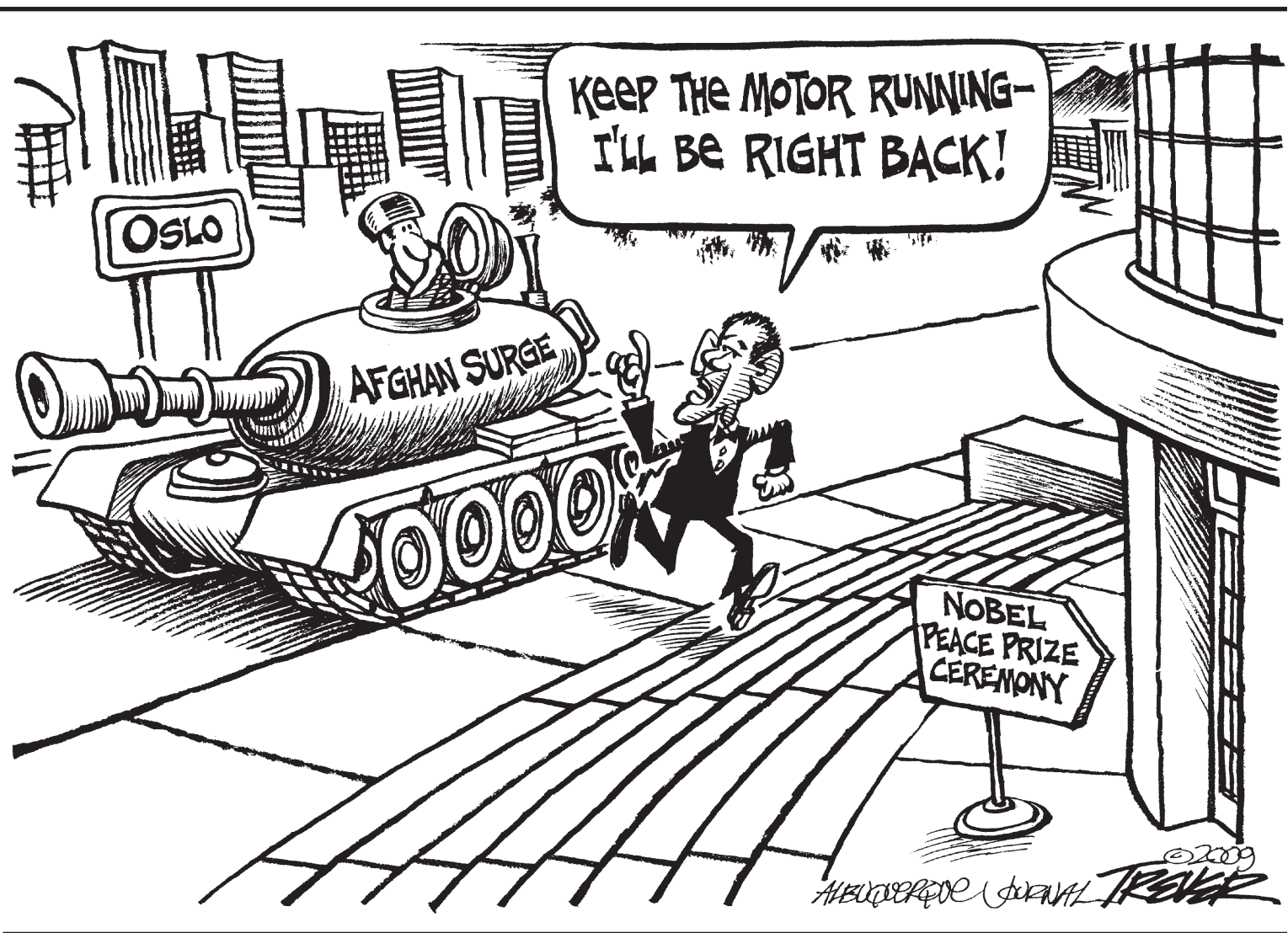
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‘Comfort trap’ shuts out clear thinking

I think most people are unknowingly stuck in what I call the comfort trap.

There are certain things we really want to believe, whether they are true or not. Truth will be dismissed or ignored if it doesn’t fit into our ideological preconceptions.

Those against a public option in the health care system flat out refuse to acknowledge the innocent people dying in our current system.

Everyone I’ve talked to who is against a publicly funded health care system immediately gives examples of people who are unfit, reckless or chronic smokers. “So you want your hard-earned tax money to pay for people who refuse to care for themselves?” they ask. The idea that some die from health problems they had no role in creating is too discomfoting to deal with, so they convince themselves it’s always the victim’s fault. This is easy because there will always be those who are responsible for their own health problems.

This argument is the perfect example of the comfort trap that is thwarting our nation’s potential.

I watched former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee discuss health care reform while doing his television show on Fox News. The former preacher’s reporting on the topic was solely concerned with the unfair nature of the Canadian health care system. There were no guests who had seen people struggle in our health care system, although I doubt they would be hard to find.

Now I have no problem with those against a public option. If they think it would cause more suffering, they have every right to campaign against a public option. If they believe they have a system better than the current one or the proposed plans, I’m willing to listen.

But I have a problem with those who ignore inconvenient facts about our current system and lecture about family values, while ignoring suffering for “ideological” reasons.



Andy Heintz

- Wildcat Ramblings

President Obama should also come clean about health care reform. Allowing a public health care system to compete with a private insurance system will not be good for everyone. Some people who are receiving the best care in the world would lose parts of their care in order to make sure everyone has access.

In reality, wealthy people in good health have no material incentive to want a public option and insurance companies have no profit motive to give health care to the sick. If they are solely motivated by their own material or physical self-interest, they will do everything in their power to keep a public option from being included in health care proposals.

Thankfully, people are driven by more than profit and health, so there will be wealthy people pushing for a public option along with the people who desperately need it.

There will also be those who feel any government intervention into health care is a threat to individual liberty and should be opposed for this reason alone. I strongly disagree with these people, though their views should be respected. But they should be willing to admit the current system leaves many people up a creek without a paddle.


Assuming everyone against a public option is solely fueled by greed is another symptom of the comfort trap our country’s stuck in.

It may be true that most people opposed to a public option are against it solely for their own self-interest, but I have no way of knowing this because I can’t be inside anyone’s head.

Sacred season still needs free speech

It is that time of year again, when Christians are reminded of our Savior’s birth. All the political, sectarian, and organized major religious groups have so confused the season that we have difficulty focusing on the real meaning of Christmas. Christmas – Christ’s Mass – is a purely Christian celebration, but we should be inclusive of all people in our expression of love and merriment. The commercialization and political correctness craze has blinded us to the real joy of celebrating Christ’s birth. We as Christians should be supportive of other religious holidays – Holy Days – and allow adherents of other faiths to celebrate in their own way. Neither majority nor minority status should be a factor.

There is no record in the New Testament that indicates yearly celebration of Jesus’ birth day. The tradition came centuries later as the organized Christian church sought to compete with various pagan winter celebrations. With the aid of government decree, the date was officially established and the traditions evolved from there. This historical fact may well indicate that the Christian community successfully replaced the pagan celebrations. However, they adopted or allowed continued use of symbols and social activities carried over from non Christian groups. Those symbols and social activities are now – again – dominating



Ken Poland

- Ken’s World

the season.

Are we protecting the sanctity of Jesus’ birth by advocating boycotting of commercial enterprises, because they do not proclaim the proper slogans? Is that not recognizing the legitimacy of commercialization of Christmas? Does that not profane the Gospel that Jesus proclaimed? You can force a child to say, “I love you.” But, you cannot force the emotional relationship that validates that love. Are we reflecting Christ’s love when we deliberately taunt others with our religious greetings or slogans?

Do we need the power of civil government to validate and protect our privilege to celebrate Christ’s birth and the Christian gospel, while excluding others from protection? If we do, then we are in danger of losing that privilege. Most civil governments around the world do not recognize Christianity as their state religion. In fact, neither does the United States of America. Our founding fathers may well have

recognized Christianity as their guiding principle, but, they very carefully declared that the government was prohibited from favoring any religious entity for special privilege or recognition.

A democracy that is based on the absolute power of simple majority is no better than a dictatorship. That is why our system requires “super majorities” to amend the Constitution.

We seem to be embroiled in heated debate concerning welfare, healthcare, and government financial subsidy to business. Nowhere in the Constitution do you find anything saying the federal government cannot be involved in those areas. However, in the case of religion, the Constitution, as amended, very clearly addresses what the government cannot do.

Amendment One, ratified Dec. 15, 1791: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Ken Poland describes himself as a semiretired farmer living north of Gem, a Christian, affiliated with American Baptist Churches, and a radical believer in separation of church and state. Contact him at rcwinc@cheerful.com.

