

# Will Americans again reject addiction to big government?

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If your disgust over America's crushing debt and the irresponsible leaders who refuse to reduce unnecessary spending has reached the fed-up point, there is an easy solution beyond whatever compromise might be reached in the current standoff between President Barack Obama and congressional Republicans. Vote Republican in 2012.

But don't vote for just any Republican, father vote for conservatives who believe the foundational principles of America still work and can rescue us from default, placing the country back on a track that leads to prosperity and greater liberty.

Last week, I was one in a series of speakers (Justice Stephen Breyer speaks next week) at the new Calvin Coolidge Museum and Education Center. My subject was "What the Past Can Teach the Present, Ensuring the Future."

There are no new ideas, only old ideas that either worked or failed. There is "nothing new under the sun," as Ecclesiastes reminds us.

Some excerpts from my address:

- Not knowing how to solve a problem is forgivable. You would expect our representatives to press on until they find a solution. Knowing how to solve a problem but refusing to solve it because you would rather have the issue run on than to offer a solution that benefits the country, is more obscene to my mind than receiving a tweet from Anthony Weiner.

- Quoting Coolidge: "There is no salvation in a narrow and bigoted partisanship. But if there is to be responsible party government, the party label must be something more

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than a mere device for securing office. Unless those who are elected under the same party designation are willing to assume sufficient responsibility and exhibit sufficient loyalty and coherence, so that they can cooperate with each other in the support of the broad general principles, of the party platform, the election is merely a mockery, no decision is made at the polls, and there is no representation of the popular will."

The election last November was an expression of the popular will. It was a repudiation of the direction in which President Obama and congressional Democrats are taking the country. Instead of moderating their far-left views, Democrats have doubled down and are behaving as if liberalism is on the rise rather than on the decline. The attitude of these elected dictators seems to be "the public be damned."

President Obama talks about "shared sacrifice," but why should people who are not responsible for the deficit pay more to irresponsible politicians who can't live within the means we provide them? Let them "sacrifice" by cutting spending. Taxpayers have sacrificed enough.

Abraham Lincoln had a little something to say on how expanding government suffocates individual freedom: "The legitimate object of government is to do for a community of people whatever they need to have done, but cannot do at all in their separate and individual capacities. In all that the people can individually do as well for themselves, government ought not to interfere."

There may never have been a better case made for the federal government's limited role and the limitless role and responsibility of the individual citizen.

These separate yet complimentary functions of state and citizen should be at the center of the 2012 campaign. It will be a difficult debate because of the number of people liberals have managed to addict to government, but it is a debate we must have. Its proper resolution will determine whether America can continue to prosper and protect and defend liberty without which the America we have known will be a subject for future historians, as they study the reasons for our decline.

We don't live in the past, but we can learn from it. Will we? Coolidge did. The presidential and congressional candidates should make a pilgrimage to this tiny hamlet to see what their education left out, or they have forgotten.

The principles by which Calvin Coolidge lived and governed are as relevant for our time as they were for his.

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