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■ In my opinion

# Bush's budget BLUNDERS

It's been a rough decade to be a fiscal conservative. On account of the \$300 billion for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and massive (but maybe ill-directed) hikes in Medicare, education and labor budgets, the American taxpayer has footed the bill for big-ticket line items that have pushed real dollar government spending past \$20,000 per household for the first time since World War II.

That remarkable figure, however, comes from a report drafted by the conservative Heritage Foundation, usually a supporter of President Bush. The administration's spending has nettled other conservative-leaning groups too; a Wall Street Journal editorial complained in 2003 about the "GOP's spending spree," lamenting that "Bush has yet to meet a spending bill he doesn't like." Indeed, the Bush administration inherited a \$236 billion annual federal surplus, whereas the federal deficit will sink to an estimated record \$427 billion in the 2005 fiscal year.

Of course, an unqualified comparison to the fiscal heyday of the late '90s is neither as fair nor as informative as some of the administration's critics like to think: An economic turnaround began before Bush took office, and the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks left already lagging consumer confidence pallid.

Moreover, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq complicate any analysis of Bush administration fiscal policy. Certainly, the need to remove



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oppressive governments from power, or at least genocidal dictators, carries a moral necessity that many leftists deny. (How exactly they ought to be removed and by whom, however, are separate and ethically thornier matters.)

Still, the central folly of the Bush administration's economic policy is not difficult to locate: Bush's dedication to fiscal conservatism is only half-hearted.

His moral clarity about fiscal self-determination is spot-on. Individuals tend to spend money on themselves more appropriately and efficiently than governments acting on their behalf. Of course, this is only true up to a point: Some kinds of infrastructure and resources are only reasonably managed by a government. The funding of reasonably neutral judiciary and law enforcement agencies is necessary to protect civil liberties and other things mandated by the spirit or letter of the Constitution.

But somehow, Bush has coupled the philosophy of a leaner federal pocketbook with that of a bigger credit limit. Between Sept. 30, 2000

and the same date in 2004, the federal deficit ballooned by \$2.22 trillion. That's about three times the \$714 billion deficit increase, adjusted for inflation, of the second term Reagan presidency, an administration oft maligned as archetypically poor fiscal managers.

Of course, defense spending hikes may be necessary in wartime. Between Bush's first inauguration and mid-2003, defense spending increased by 34 percent. But non-defense discretionary spending jumped 28 percent during the same period. In fact, 55 percent of the spending increases were unrelated to defense and homeland security, according to the Heritage Foundation analysis.

The problem is not difficult to see: Spending has skyrocketed, but thanks to both a flagging economy and tax cuts, federal revenue has decreased. Given that some eight percent of federal spending now goes to paying interest on existing debt, overextending the national pocketbook is a poor tool for long-term planning.

Present governmental spending far outstrips what it should be and tax cuts are economically and morally beneficial, but only when made fiscally sound by commensurate spending cuts. Some political battles are pitched between principle and pragmatism. Regrettably, the Bush administration's economic policies are allied with neither.

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■ Guest commentary

# Government 'minions' should stay away from our right to self defense

Guns are tools used to inflict or threaten violence. Violence or the use of physical force is the most basic means of providing for one's personal safety. Should I be denied this basic right?

Many will point to statistics and studies to suggest that guns do more damage than good, and therefore assert that the government can legitimately revoke this natural right in the name of "safety." The standard social contract follows that in order to compensate for the loss of the right to defend one's self, the government will provide that defense in the form of the military, CIA, state and local police, etc. I challenge this argument on the grounds of my firm and unwavering views on individual liberty and freedom, an affirmation

that I thought would be more welcome on such a "liberal" and "free-spirited" campus.

I firmly believe the government never has the right to revoke the right to choose one's own method of self-defense, not even in the name of some illusory vision of idealism. Even worse than to remove the right to personal defense is to license it out to an elite class of professional bullies. I don't want my freedom subsidized, arbitrarily plucked from me by some appointed council that claims for itself the privilege to apportion out rights and freedom as it chooses.

Furthermore, I don't accept how the government creates a higher caste of minimally educated "professionals" who get to dispense of my

right to defense. I'm not convinced any institutional form of forceful social control is inherently better than I am, and therefore I am convinced it is essential I am equipped with any necessary resource to defend myself and my freedoms against these controlling institutions and their sharply uniformed minions. I don't trust the government with my freedom and I don't trust their ministers of justice with keeping me safe.

So, on the basis of a genuine belief in freedom and distrust of authority, I'd like to remain my own authority and not concede to the government or its institutions any privileges I cannot revoke at my leisure when they misuse them.

Chris Fanshier lives in Eugene

■ Editorial

# Is Bush hoping for another Cold War?

North Korea's declaration that it possesses nuclear weapons should be a wake-up call for all Americans. How can the Bush administration expect other countries to abandon their nuclear aspirations when they have con- doned, and are currently participating in, nuclear proliferation?

When the father of Pakistan's nuclear program, Abdul Qadeer Khan, publicly confessed to passing nuclear secrets to North Korea, Iran and Libya last year, the Bush administration did next to nothing about it. Why? Because Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf — who knew about the whole thing according to Khan, an accusation that Musharraf denies — was our partner in the war on terror. When you have friends like these ...

President Bush appears to be doing everything in his power to start a second nuclear arms race. Eerily, this week a test of the national missile defense shield failed for the third straight time in two years, according to the Los Angeles Times. Furthermore, the administration is pushing for additional research into less devastating, so-called "usable" nuclear weapons.

This has the effect of pushing other countries into developing their own usable nukes in order to even the nuclear playing field. As the New York Times editorial board wrote on Feb. 10, "America's nuclear creativity should be focused on convincing nations like Iran and North Korea that nuclear weapons will not enhance their own security, not on setting a perverse contrary example."

From backing out of the Kyoto Protocol — which took effect Wednesday and was ratified by 140 countries — to refusing to recognize the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, to advancing a policy of preemptive war, the diplomacy-phobic Bush administration has done little except give rogue nations a giant excuse for their misbehavior. On the global stage, America acts as if international norms should apply to everyone but Americans. We have a "do as we say, not as we do" mentality; this arrogance has earned our government near universal hatred throughout the world. When President Bush proclaims, "Iran with a nuclear weapon would be a very destabilizing force in the world," his words carry the stench of hypocrisy. Do American nukes, and our new breed of so-called usable nukes, have a stabilizing force?

If we really want to pursue a "Son of Star Wars" program, then we should do it multilaterally and transparently, so that everyone could be protected by the missile shield. We also need to double the international inspection effort of the International Atomic Energy Agency and make penalties for violations much more severe, as U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan called for at Sunday's security conference in Germany.

But most of all, the U.S. has to stop its own nuclear proliferation by abandoning research and development on usable nuclear weapons. In addition, we must work with other nations to reduce existing arsenals and account for and protect all nuclear stocks to ensure that one of those weapons doesn't fall into the hands of a terrorist group like al-Qaida.

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