

OPINION

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Twisted Logic on Tax Cuts

Don't cave to Obama's opponents

BY MARC H. MORIAL

It comes as no surprise to most of us that 2+2 does not equal 22.

But the current debate over Bush-era tax cuts is based on an illogical equation. The goal of any tax plan should be to stimulate the economy, produce jobs and ease the burden on working and middle-class Americans. Anything else is pretending that 2+2=22.

The 2001 tax plan adopted to stimulate the economy was heavily weighted in favor of higher income taxpayers. Middle- and working-class Americans got crumbs while the upper echelon got a seven-course meal. And since the start of the great recession in 2007, the incomes of average Americans have plunged while those of chief executive officers and



bankers have soared.

An extension of tax cuts for the highest income groups makes sense only if tied to measures that will bolster economic growth. That means support for business investment, small businesses and another extension of unemployment benefits. Two million unemployed will exhaust their benefits at the end of the year if there's no extension.

It is twisted logic to claim the country can't afford another unemployment benefit extension while simultaneously fighting to explode the deficit with another big tax break for the rich.

The reality is, the increase in income for high net worth groups resulting from the Bush tax cuts was not used to create jobs in America – much of it in fact was invested overseas. Employment rose only 0.9 percent

between 2001 and 2003. Tax cuts for the top five percent was simply a bad investment by any measure.

Those in the "tax-cuts for the rich" crowd who claim deficit reduction as an ultimate goal are talking out of both sides of their mouths. The inequity of their proposal is compounded by the absurd fact that it will actually exacerbate the deficit problem by adding another \$700 billion to our current \$1.3 trillion national debt over the next 10 years.

Any extension of tax cuts for the highest income groups not only should be tied to job-creation measures, but they should be temporary - limited to no more than three years. If the top 5 percent is getting a seven-course meal, middle- and working-class Americans must be guaranteed at least an entrée.

How, in good conscience, can we give tax breaks to the wealthiest while deny-

ing unemployment benefits to middle and working class Americans who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own?

How can we make it possible for millionaires to buy an extra Mercedes each year, while middle class families are struggling to pay bills and send their kids to college? How can we continue to give tax breaks to individuals and companies that are shipping jobs overseas, while 15 million Americans are desperately looking for work?

President Obama should not cave to a Congress pretending that 2+2=22. The country has nothing to gain from any attempt by the President to appease those who have already declared their only goal is to assure his defeat in 2012 – even if that means making a dire economic situation worse.

Marc H. Morial is president and chief executive officer of the National Urban League.

Remembering the Least Among Us

Giving our time, talent and treasure

BY BENTLEY DE BARDELABEN



As I enter the 2010 holiday season, I admit that I am looking forward to eating turkey, dressing, cranberry sauce, watching football and laughing

out loud with my loved ones. History has proven that a good time will be had by most, if not all.

However, I am acutely aware that many people will find it difficult to celebrate the season or feel festive despite the multitude of reminders bombarding our senses as we move about our daily lives.

Sure reasons will vary, but sadness, depression and anxieties overhang our land. Over the past months, people, some of whom are our neighbors, will have lost their livelihood, their shelter, a family member, close friend or learned of a recent illness to self or loved one.

Believe it or not, even the loss of daylight and sunlight can affect a person's mood. Human life is wrought with up and downs. None of us can escape its twists and turns, highs and lows. Finding supports and tools to effectively manage these stressors as they occur is essential to our success.

As a person of faith, prayer is

important to me. It is something that I practice daily. Yet, when one is feeling "down in the dumps" or experiencing the "blues" prayer may not be enough to move one through the fog. Fortunately, mental health programs abound in our communities and are available for little to no cost. Facilities can be found online. One such website managed by the government's health administration is samhsa.gov.

To be candid, during the course of this year and in the span of a few months, both of my parents had major health scares. The emotional toll that it had on me, while trying to maintain full time employment, caused me great distress. I knew it and my loved ones noticed the strain as well.

Thankfully, I addressed the symptoms by meeting with a therapist to help me process the sensory overload I felt. I did this in addition to my prayer and meditation routine. Within weeks, I felt better and I saw a way out. Additionally, my

parents are recuperating nicely and that too has been a relief to my heart and mind.

As we begin to navigate the pressures of the holiday season, let us remember those for whom this time may be especially difficult. If we are able to be generous of time, talent and treasure, let us consider sharing them.

Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the infirmed and more importantly find a reason to express gratitude. My faith teaches me that in doing these things, I am honoring each of us as a child of God.

Everyone deserves respect, self worth, dignity, grace, forgiveness and love. I have learned that the reward in the giving is greater, than in the receiving. So whatever situation you are currently in, I pray your holidays will be merry, bright and filled with the awareness of God's unfailing love and light.

Bentley de Bardelaben is an executive for Justice Ministries in the United Church of Christ.

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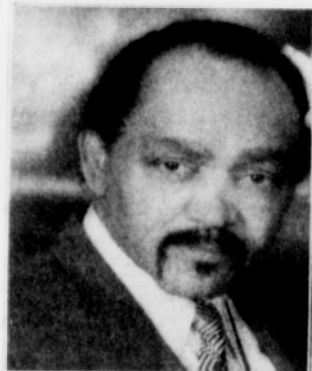
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