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NEWS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER



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100 DAYS...AND BEYOND

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Let's face it, the 100 day standard for evaluating American Presidents is arbitrary, and probably unfair. In fact, it might have received even less attention this year had not President Clinton raised the stakes himself by declaring on the campaign trail that his first 100 days would be -- and I quote -- "an explosive hundred day action period." Well, there's been a lot of action, but I don't believe the American people wanted the explosion of new taxes, new spending and new mandates from Washington.

That's not the kind of change Americans were voting for this past November. There is no question Bill Clinton ran a clever and effective campaign, but with only 43% of the voters supporting him in November, he did not come to Washington with a ringing mandate.

Healthy Two-Party System, Not Gridlock

Unfortunately, some partisans want to lock out the other 57% for the next three years -- Republicans, Independents, supporters of Ross Perot and many Democrats, too -- using the "gridlock" gimmick as a self-proclaimed mandate for a one-party government, a blank check for the President and a green light for Congress. But the gridlock gimmick won't sell. Americans want competition, they want alternative views, and they want a healthy two-party system. So let me ask:

Do we live in a monarchy? Is the President a president, or is he a king? Are we required by some law to accept whatever the President proposes without any opportunity for discussion, debate or suggestion of constructive alternatives? And if we so disagree with some aspect of the President's plan, if we believe it truly and sincerely harmful to the long-range interests of the Country, are we somehow obligated to stand silent and adopt the President's plan lest we be accused of partisanship?

That's not Bob Dole asking those questions -- that's George Mitchell, the Majority Leader of the Senate, on February 8th, 1992 ... just last year. I agree with his rousing defense of Senate Republicans and the two-party system. And I agree with his assessment that no President, no matter how popular, is a king.

The GOP's First 100 Days

Let's not forget that today also marks the first 100 days for Republicans. And we've had an active time too, contrary to what some folks want you to believe. We've offered constructive alternatives in committees and on the Senate floor, we've welcomed the President to our policy luncheon, we've consulted with Democrats, and best of all, we've kept in touch with the people.

We may be the minority in Congress, but on many issues, we represent the majority of the American people. When it came to putting together a budget package, our alternative would have slashed the deficit by at least as much as the Clinton plan without raising one cent in new taxes. Spending cuts -- that's what the American people are demanding.

No doubt about it, Republicans knew we would take some heat when we stood up for the American taxpayers and refused to raise the deficit in the name of so-called "emergency" stimulus spending. Well, we have a different name for what we did. It's

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called saving the taxpayers money. When the American people want protection from bad legislation -- such as President Clinton's record-breaking tax increases -- then it's not gridlock. When you protect the taxpayers from wasteful deficit spending, it's not gridlock.

No Mandate for Tax & Spend

Let me be clear. Republicans respect President Clinton. We want him to succeed. We want to cooperate. And we know he is trying hard, which is why I have given him a 100 day grade of "E" for effort. But if President Clinton is claiming a mandate for taxing and spending, then he is seriously misreading the voter's message and their anger.

Frankly, it's time for the White House to slow down, take a time out and get focused. And it looks like a few responsible folks down there may be hearing our Two Minute Warning. After 100 days, it's clear that the Administration is trying to do too much. And unfortunately, much of what it's trying to rush into law is a liberal agenda the American people didn't hear anything about during the campaign. In fact, most of what they are seeing these days represents everything the people thought they were voting against in November.

So, the White House can't blame the voters when they say the first 100 days has demonstrated that Bill Clinton is not the "New Democrat" he said he was during the campaign. After all, he promised that he wouldn't be another "tax and spend" Democrat, yet he is pushing hard for the biggest tax increase in history. He promised spending restraint, yet even his own budget plan will increase the national debt by one trillion dollars. He promised to keep America strong, yet he is slashing the defense budget way beyond what the experts warn us is prudent, costing Americans almost two million jobs along the way. He promised deficit reduction, yet he went to the mat to raise the deficit by \$19 billion in the name of a stimulus "emergency".

That's what the stimulus battle was all about: a fundamental difference in party philosophies -- Bill Clinton and the Democrat Majority on Capitol Hill wanted to spend money we don't have, and Republicans wanted to cut spending and hold the line on the deficit. And make no mistake, Republicans did support certain elements of the so-called stimulus bill, including some funding for summer jobs, childhood immunizations and initiatives to support real jobs -- and here's the best part, we proposed to pay for it, just like the American people are demanding.

Vote of "No Confidence" in Clinton's Frightening Tax Explosion

It's no wonder that businesses, not to mention the taxpayers, have been scared to death by the big tax explosion coming out of the White House. No investor, no entrepreneur, no working family wants to take a risk when all they see and hear from the White House is spending and taxing.

Just look at the 100 day vote of no-confidence the American people gave the President's tax and spend plan in the first quarter of this year -- an anemic 1.8% worth of growth. It's a fact, consumers weren't spending, they were worrying...and with good reason.

I've talked to businessmen and women all over the country and they've told me that they are putting plans on hold -- expansion, new hiring, investment -- because of the chilling effects of the Clinton tax agenda.

If the White House is looking for a real stimulus, it could give working America a big boost by dumping its misguided new tax package. With the package heading to the Finance Committee, Republicans there will be taking it to our body shop, banging some sense into it, and putting a crowbar to the chrome-plated tax accessories. And we can start by stripping off the President's painful tax on energy users, which the last time I checked, means everybody.

So I hope the Administration does reassess, and take the time to learn from its mistakes. Starting on day 101, the Clinton Administration can get back on track by putting together a common sense agenda that looks more like America and less like a liberal shopping list.

Listen to Ross & Rush, Not to Mention Senate & House GOP

Frankly, the President and his eager high-tech staff need to readjust their satellite dish so they can hear the men and women up and down Main Street America for a change, instead of all the special interests.

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They need to spend less time watching video replays of their campaign, and a lot more time watching Rush Limbaugh and Ross Perot. They could even dial in House and Senate Republicans once and a while.

Don't get me wrong. We don't have all the answers. We're not perfect. But we do want to be players.

But when we have different views on what's best for America -- as we did during the so-called stimulus debate -- we will speak up. Let me put it this way:

We seek cooperation, but we also seek to meet our responsibilities as a co-equal branch of government. We welcome the President's initiatives...but it is not our intention to merely sit back and wait to see if the President proposes solutions to the problems facing our society. We intend to act where necessary -- hopefully, with the President. If necessary, without him.

Now, is that a strategy for gridlock? I don't think so. In fact, it's not even a strategy from Bob Dole. It's another direct quote from my friend Senator George Mitchell. This one's a 1989 quote, and no one dared suggest four years ago that Senator Mitchell was promoting gridlock.

The Next 100 Days

Now, Republicans may not have the perfect prescription for every problem, but I guarantee we can help the President give the American people the kind of balance they thought they were voting for this past November. And we're ready to help make the next 100 days a lot better than the first 100.

While we welcome the President's initiatives, there are some areas where we feel very strongly we must act:

♦ Crime: Crime continues to hold America hostage -- in fact, you might call crime the hostage crisis of the '90s. That's why I intend to introduce a tough, comprehensive anti-crime bill that will put more police on the streets, devote more resources to prosecuting gang activity, and build more federal prisons ... and best of all, we will find a way to pay for it. Security is not cheap, but can we afford anything less?

Unfortunately, the Clinton Administration has proposed to cut, not expand, funding for prison construction, despite the President's campaign pledge to put 100,000 more police on the streets -- a promise on which he has yet to deliver. His approach to crime -- focusing on the front-end but ignoring the back-end of the criminal justice system, prisons -- is unwise, and ultimately, at war with itself.

♦ Health Care: Senate Republicans are committed to comprehensive health care reform. Make no mistake, solving the health care challenge will be impossible without strong bipartisan support. Republicans are ready to help, and we suggest starting with these valuable yardsticks: we must protect the quality of our health care system, the quality that has made American health care the envy of the world; we must increase access, while preserving the choice of health care options for consumers, not forfeiting that flexibility to the government; we must preserve jobs, which means protecting employers from crippling taxes and debilitating mandates; we must avoid government controlled care -- government should be a helping hand, not a fist; we must control costs, by encouraging preventive medicine, and creating incentives for providers, employees and employers to use care wisely; and finally, we need real malpractice reform.

Obviously, none of this will come easily, and paying for it is the bottomline challenge.

While most of the focus during the first 100 days has been on areas of disagreement with the Clinton administration, there are several areas where you'll see plenty of bipartisanship during the next 100 days.

♦ Trade: The Clinton administration's main trade efforts have been very slow out of the blocks, in part because of big labor's grip on the President and his party. I know that Budget

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Director Leon Panetta has pronounced the North American Free Trade agreement "dead," but I don't share that view. But let's face it, if it's going to be revived, it will take a lot more leadership from the White House than we've seen so far.

I support the North America Free Trade Agreement negotiated in the Bush Administration, and just yesterday, I joined 26 of my colleagues in sending a letter to the President urging him to get on with negotiating the supplemental agreements, but not by creating two new environmental and labor bureaucracies -- we have plenty of those already. We look forward to working with the President, and supporting a sound trade agreement that will lead to new jobs and economic growth.

♦ Russian Aid: I have pledged my support to the President in pushing ahead with aid for the struggling Russian democracy. As far as I'm concerned, this is an investment in a peaceful future. The failure of Russian reform could lead to another arms race, costing us billions of dollars and renewing the risk of an even costlier nuclear confrontation. So let's work together, and let's pay for it, too. But let's not link it to some new kind of stimulus package -- that's a recipe for failure on both fronts.

♦ Bosnia: I was in the Oval Office earlier this week, and I stood up to tell the President he had my support for action -- lifting the arms embargo to allow the Bosnians to at least defend themselves; and NATO air strikes against Serbian military positions. In my view, US and Western policy towards this humanitarian nightmare has been a dark chapter in our proud history of confronting tyranny. After all, we are the only remaining superpower on the globe, and if we can't provide leadership now, we're setting a dangerous precedent for the next three years.

Let me close by saying, while we've heard a lot of talk about "change", one thing never changes -- governing is always a whole lot harder than campaigning. With the first 100 days now history, here comes the hard part: the next 1360.

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