



Sad Implications of the Two Dueling Santa Claus Strategies in Political Economics

An Earth Manifesto publication by Dr. Tiffany B. Twain
First version January 2012, latest revision Sept. 1, 2020

Politics has become an internecine game in which members of the two dominant competing political parties strive to win elections and gain power by using distinctly contrasting strategies. Democrats try to appeal broadly to the people by offering plans and priorities that are broadly fair and inclusive, promising things like better and more affordable healthcare for all, improved public education, farsighted investments in physical infrastructure, and more government spending on adequate social safety net programs, and reasonable protections of clean air, clean water, a stable climate and the environmental commons. In contrast, Republicans promise to cut taxes, and they lie to the people about who the main beneficiaries of this plan will be, which always turns out to be mainly the top 1%. They do this in fiscally irresponsible ways by perpetrating the scam of borrowing trillions of dollars from every taxpayer in every future year and to give most of the proceeds to people that are already wealthy.

Many of these rich people, in turn, contribute large amounts of money to corruptly promote the careers of these scheming politicians. Since this tax cut strategy results in shortfalls of government revenues, it necessitates reductions in spending that would otherwise benefit the vast majority of the people, so these politicians should only be supported by a relative few, and they should be opposed by the many. In order to succeed at this treacherous strategy, "conservative" politicians not only deceive the people about who will benefit from their plans, but also about the risk-stoking debt financing of this scam and the austerity measures that will be required to prevent the resulting spiking debt from causing an eventual financial crisis and economic hard times.

Politicians are engaged in this power struggle between influential people who demand to pay less tax and competing constituencies that seek more generous government spending on a wide variety of programs. This essay assesses the two dueling Santa Claus strategies that are tailored to appeal to these factions, and it delves into these two hyper-partisan strategies of political economics that involve either tax-cutting plans or increased spending plans. The bottom line result of these two competing ideologies is that the rights of people in the future to be free from excessively burdensome debt obligations are being rudely and rashly ignored. With the election of Donald Trump and his cronies in November 2016, and subsequent domineering and uncompromising One Party Republican rule, the sad implications of this internecine struggle have been amplified, and now the tragic impacts of current rule are of increasing concern.

The enormous national debt obligation has been increasing due to record annual deficits in the federal budget in the past 20 years. The national debt now exceeds 100% of GDP, a level previously experienced only in World War II years and immediately thereafter. This high level of debt creates serious economic risks and intensified pressures for austerity measures, along with heightened possibilities of market turmoil and political instability and the potentiality for another destabilizing international financial crisis. It would behoove us to understand these two driving Santa Claus strategies better, so as to see the way clear to smarter and fairer national policies.

Donald Trump has proved that he will say and do the most nefarious things possible to get money and power. Among the most treacherous was his assertion that he would eliminate the national debt, when in fact his intention was to push an agenda that would dangerously drive up the debt and mortgage the future to increase the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few.

Super-charged political conflicts over the issue of a rapidly expanding U.S. national debt took place on several occasions in the past decade. The specter of this mounting debt and other hyper-political considerations led to a 16-day shutdown of the federal government by Republicans in October 2013. In that event, arrogant Senator Ted Cruz of Texas and other conservatives threatened to make the government default on the national debt. This scheme was a "Tea Party shutdown", an instance of political grandstanding that cost billions of dollars.

It is critically important that voters better understand the sad implications and tragic impacts that these two strategies have for our future well-being and security, and for the sustainability of human societies. These issues are provocatively explored throughout the *Earth Manifesto*, as in the essay *Real Live Experiments in Applied Trickle-Down Theoretics*, which can be found online and in the published book *Common Sense Revival*. See those evocatively convincing assessments of issues related to perspectives on trickle-down economics, corrupted national tax policy, worsening inequalities, the rationales used in competing ideologies, and the most providential plans for a healthier and more secure country.

Scrutiny of the Two Dueling Santa Claus Strategies

A political economist named Jude Wanniski originally proposed the Two Santa Claus Theory of electioneering and governing. It is a real interesting idea. Politicians in our democracy tend to make many promises to voters to get elected. The Two Santa Claus Theory holds that, when one political party and its candidates promise to spend funds to provide a wide variety of perks, services and benefits to voters, the other party often competes with this strategy by promising to cut taxes to attract the support of wealthy people and thus help finance a barrage of political ads that seek to confuse voters and sell them on their shrewdly selfish agenda.

Economic fundamentalists like Milton Friedman (1912 - 2006) contended that the only way to control the growth of government spending is by starving the government of revenue. To achieve this starvation, the strategic initiative of cutting taxes has been ardently advocated, but unfortunately, cutting taxes since 1980 has NEVER ONCE resulted in lower total federal government spending. Annual spending by the federal government has increased every single year since 1980, when it was under \$600 billion, through fiscal year 2018-2019, when it was more than \$4 trillion.

"Figures often beguile me, particularly when I have the arranging of them myself; in which case the remark attributed to Disraeli would often apply with justice and force: "There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies and statistics."

--- Mark Twain

Since the tactic of cutting taxes reduces tax revenues, and this is coupled with continuous increases in spending, the inevitable outcome has been annual budget deficits and an increasing national debt. In January of 1981, when Ronald Reagan took office, the national debt was less than \$1 trillion. It has increased to almost \$27 trillion in September 2020. There is no doubt about it: large budget deficits and record levels of national debt are the result of these twin Santa Claus strategies of cutting taxes and increasing spending.

The only time that budget surpluses were created in the last three decades was when President Bill Clinton increased taxes and also did a relatively good job of controlling spending by the federal government. Clinton compromised by triangulating to economic positions that resulted in these budget surpluses. In contrast, when George W. Bush was president, he embraced both Santa Claus strategies at the same time. He slashed taxes to get the strong support of rich people, and he profligately ramped up spending on wars and a costly new program for prescription drugs for Medicare recipients, among other things. The main beneficiaries of this strategy were the wealthiest Americans and vested interests like Big Oil and enormously profitable pharmaceutical companies and corporate entities involved in the military-industrial complex. These "gains" came at the expense of every future taxpayer in every future year, and of the prospects of all people in future generations.

Whole edifices of ideology have sprung up to defend Santa Claus spending and Santa Claus tax cutting, and to get voters to go along with the narrowly circumscribed agendas of the real decision makers in our society. These "deciders" are the people with lots of money and the vested interest groups that focus on outcomes that are beneficial to themselves at the expense of the common good.

Advocates for increased government spending often cite the need for Keynesian economic stimulus to create jobs and grow the economy. They sensibly support an expansion of investments in public education, physical infrastructure, social safety programs, environmental protections and other greater good goals. And they use this rationale to justify deficit spending.

In contrast, tax-cut disciples stick religiously to the "purity" of their dogmas by pledging no tax increases ever, no matter what, come Hell or high water. They cite "supply-side" economic theories, as discussed below, and they disingenuously misconstrue the infamous Laffer Curve to hypothesize that reductions in taxes will result in higher total tax revenues. This is a confounding concept that postulates "Less Revenue Is More Revenue", like some madcap nonsense from George Orwell's dystopian novel *1984*. These particular partisans work tirelessly to promote policies that reduce protections of consumers, citizens and the environment, and they dishonestly take crude advantage of the frustrations and anger of social conservatives and folks on the Religious Right to gain more political power and ramp up resource extraction and the exploitation of working people.

Trump Republicans have worked like madmen to slash taxes on rich people and giant corporations and then force cuts in spending on almost everything other than the military (and then pandemic recession stimulus), causing deficit spending to spike more rapidly in 2020 than ever before, and the Congressional Budget Office forecasts bigger deficits to come.

In the most civil manner possible, I'd like to express my deeply felt suspicion that the economist John Kenneth Galbraith was incisively correct when he once observed: "The modern conservative is engaged in one of man's oldest exercises in moral philosophy: that is, the search for a superior moral justification for selfishness."

Republicans definitely don't have a monopoly on unscrupulousness, but they sure seem to dominate the market! As Huck Finn said in *The Further Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, these ideas ought "to give the bullfrogs something to croak about for days, I bet."

Let's seek to better understand the two dueling Santa Claus strategies in political economics, and their tragic impacts. Read on!

Considerations of Supply-Side Economics

Jude Wanniski was one of the first persons to promote this dogma of supply-side economics and laughable interpretations of Laffer Curve hypotheses about how to optimize tax revenues. A little background on these ideas helps us see how profoundly and adversely they affect our society today.

Supply-side economics is a theory that maintains tax cuts stimulate economic growth and thus may miraculously pay for themselves. The theory was promulgated by American economist Arthur Laffer, who had developed the Laffer Curve to explain it. It is advantageous to understand exactly what was he thinking in making the counterintuitive assertion that cuts in taxes would result in higher tax revenues. At a zero tax rate, no tax revenues would be generated. At a tax rate of 100%, the theory goes, tax revenues would also be zero, because there would be no incentive to work or take investment risks to earn any income, and the motive to evade paying taxes would be overwhelming. The Laffer Curve model proposed a hypothetical tax rate somewhere between 0% and 100% at which revenues would be maximized. Jude Wanniski argued that tax cuts would result in increased revenues at any point where tax rates were higher than this optimum revenue-maximizing rate.

Ronald Reagan latched onto this simplistic and deceitful theory and enthusiastically endorsed it, and it became known as "trickle-down economics". George H.W. Bush appropriately described it as "voodoo economics", and the facts concerning the outcomes associated with this dogma definitely confirm this disparaging characterization.

Jude Wanniski was a zealous proponent of lower tax rates, so he fervently pushed the fanciful concept of tax revenue optimization embodied in the Laffer Curve. Substantial controversy surrounds this whole idea. It is implausible that significant tax cuts would result in higher total tax revenues at any real world level, or conversely that increases in taxes would actually result in lower total tax revenues. Economist Paul Pecorino argued in 1995 that the peak of the Laffer Curve would occur in the range of top tax rates being around 65%. Economic conservatives always tend to estimate the point to be lower; in fact, they claim that every tax cut, no matter what

the current rates are, is desirable because it will stimulate economic growth and thus increase tax revenues. These are true fanatics among proponents of Santa Claus tax cuts.

The top tax rate was 35% for years, before it was increased under President Obama to 39.6%, and almost every Republican politician obstinately asserts that a big reduction in this rate would be the best plan for the American people. Donald Trump and all the Republicans in Congress selfishly slashed tax rates on the highest levels of income to benefit rich people and giant corporations, and they made similar fraudulent assertions that such tax cuts will not require huge new amounts of deficit financing. This is being proven to be a really big lie as deficits soared after the Republican Tax Cut law was passed in December 2017.

True to this ideology, Trump's Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin claimed in 2017 that economic growth would result from the tax cuts they were pushing, and it would be so dramatic -- "close to \$2 trillion over 10 years" -- that it would all but recoup the lost revenue from the radical reductions in tax rates. This was a not true.

Conservatives have used the evocative aphorism, "a rising tide lifts all boats" in claiming that tax cuts for high-income earners benefit everyone. The evidence, however, reveals that in the absence of appropriately fair policies, rising tides lift some boats but cause many other boats that are tightly anchored to be dragged down to a sad demise. Those who cannot afford a boat in the first place remain stranded high and dry, and increasingly desperate, as inequalities, inequities and injustices increase.

I chuckle aloud, and rather ruefully, at the broad abuses of supposition, simplistic reasoning, dishonest spin, manipulative disingenuousness, and self-serving deception that the Laffer Curve has enabled. The Laffer Curve is a hypothetical graph that is a symbol of cunning propaganda working overtime to rationalize uninterrupted progress toward an increasing concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the few. This pathetic trend has accompanying side effects that are unfortunate because they lead to an empathy-deficient worsening of hardships in the lives of many. Tough love? More accurately, TOUGH LUCK, brother!

Many wealthy people contribute generously to "conservative" politicians and corporate front groups that help enable corporations, insiders, CEOs and investors to gain more profits, perks, privileges and power. Supply-side proponents have captured the Republican Party since 1980, and they zealously oppose government regulations, and stubbornly adhere to discredited claims that cutting taxes will generate more revenues. Look into how badly such obtuse adherence to ideology turned out for Governor Sam Brownback and the people in Kansas!

Since the main outcome of tax-cutting policies in the four decades since 1980 has been to dangerously increase budget deficits and the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few, it has become increasingly obvious that this ideology is a smoke-and-mirrors tall tale that is transparently erroneous and deceitful. Historically, low tax rates on those who earn the highest incomes are NOT the best plan for the country as a whole.

Under Trump, conservatives are doubling down on their Santa Claus strategy of giving wealthy people ever-lower tax rates, after having spent years signing "purity pledges" that committed them to narrowly opposing any solution to debt problems that involves higher tax rates or the elimination of tax loopholes favoring giant corporations and rich people. And all Republicans clamor for more tax breaks for corporations and rich people.

"Follow the money. Always follow the money."

--- Deep Throat, in *All the President's Men*, the 1976 film about the Watergate scandal

The Implications for Future Generations of Competing Santa Claus Gambits

Abraham Lincoln once stated early in his life that his greatest ambition was to be truly esteemed by his fellow men, and to achieve this by rendering himself worthy of their esteem. That is a noble and worthy quality of good leadership. Today, one might think that the greatest ambition of most of our highly partisan political representatives is of much meaner and more selfishly myopic compulsions.

Sensationally, in Abraham Lincoln's "First Reported Speech" (January 1837) he said: "These capitalists generally act harmoniously and in concert to fleece the people, and now that they have got into a quarrel with themselves, we are called upon to appropriate the people's money to settle the quarrel."

Abraham Lincoln also declared, "The task of our forefathers was to uprear upon the hills and valleys of our land a

political edifice of liberty and equal rights, and it is ours to transmit these undecayed by the lapse of time and untorn by usurpation to the next generation. This task is imperatively required of us faithfully to perform in gratitude to our fathers, justice to ourselves, duty to posterity, and love for our species in general."

Smiling irony is an endlessly entertaining trickster. National decision-making in the USA during the Obama administration was afflicted by a ruthless game of political brinksmanship over the need to find a way to reduce the unprecedented amounts of deficit financing that were incurred to recover from the 2008-9 recession. The negotiations over the bloated national debt were intense in the summer of 2011, and they led to the brink of a default that August. Then a "Super Committee" was appointed to find a way to cut about 15% of a projected \$10 trillion increase in the national debt in the following 10 year period. But well-heeled moneyed interests have proven to be stubbornly intransigent and completely unwilling to give up one iota in compromise on their cherished low tax rates, tax loopholes, corporate subsidies and tax evasion schemes. So the Super Committee flopped, and their failure to find a sensible solution created a "fiscal cliff".

Irony looks on. Only eight months before that, in December 2010, as George W. Bush's regressive tax cuts were about to expire, President Obama and Senator Mitch McConnell reached a compromise deal, behind closed doors, that was estimated to add \$858 billion to the national debt over the course of the following two years. The brazen Bush tax cuts had already added trillions of dollars to the national debt, and a large proportion of this additional \$858 billion in new borrowing primarily benefitted people who were already wealthy. Working people were grudgingly granted some gimmicky crumbs in this compromise, in the form of temporarily lowered payroll taxes to encourage them to continue to work hard and be complacent about this bad deal, and to accept the cumulative worsening deal that gives the richest 1% most of the profits and benefits of this system.

The provision to cut payroll taxes was estimated to result in a cost of \$112 billion. At least it was a good idea from the standpoint that it gave workers more money in their paychecks, but it was a bad plan from the perspective that payroll taxes are important in financing both Social Security and Medicare. Such a cut, in theory, had a more stimulative effect on consumer spending -- and thus on job creation -- than tax cuts for the rich, but this gambit somewhat eroded the solvency of the Social Security system and was thus misguided.

Social Security is a retirement income system that needs all the revenue it can get to remain solvent in coming years. The year 2010 was the first year that demographics finally caught up with the Social Security system and resulted in more money being paid out to growing numbers of retirees than was collected from working people. This provision to cut payroll taxes was another gimmicky and fiscally foolish plan, and it served to undermine funding for Social Security and Medicare that provide such crucial lifelines to millions of retired Americans. We should not be so willing to undermine the solvency of these plans. For a revolutionarily simple common sense solution to the future state of these programs, see *Radically Simple Ways to Make America Fairer, and to Fix Both Social Security and Health Care So We Can Move On to Address Much Bigger Issues*.

The December 2010 "compromise" was really just another in a long series of capitulations to the small minority of wealthy people who control our political system. These people wanted to have the tax cuts made in December 2012 become permanent, of course, and on top of that, many Republicans proposed and continue to propose further reductions in taxes on the wealthy. These people apparently don't give a damn that this generosity is coming at the expense of the majority of Americans, and of all people in future generations.

Politicians have obviously been failing to govern fairly and sensibly. They not only avoided making what should have been an easy decision on fairer taxation in the December 2010 compromise, but they also figuratively kicked the can down the road for two years, to a time when the expedient exigencies of the then-upcoming presidential election made fair-minded solutions less tenable.

This "compromise" left intact one of the most egregious tax-abuse provisions put into place to reward wealthy hedge fund managers and venture capitalists and private equity managers. This is the so-called "carried interest" provision, which allows these Wall Street schemers to declare much of their enormous incomes as capital gains rather than ordinary income, which are subject to only 15% tax on their huge earnings rather than the 35% top rate at the time that would otherwise have been owed. This loophole is seen by almost everyone who understands it as being indefensible, yet nonetheless the influence of this tiny minority of high-income earners is so powerful

that they have managed to preserve this outlandish scam for many years. Doesn't it seem like these folks have overplayed their hands? Fair-minded people think so!

Donald Trump said during the 2016 campaign that these people "are getting away with murder", but since grabbing power, he has allowed many more grifters to get away with a shocking litany of misdeeds and scams.

Some people express deep concerns that the two viciously-competing Santa Claus tactics of cutting taxes and increasing spending are creating a risk that could cause another full-blown financial crisis. In any case, there is no doubt that this internecine competition is negatively influencing our national planning and hampering better approaches. Our political representatives should responsibly work together better to reduce these risks. Disaster capitalism and extreme partisanship have collaborated to double down on bets that this game of stealing from the future to further enrich already wealthy people can be continued a bit longer before the piper must be paid. This insidiously corrosive game is perversely predatory upon everyone in the future.

The actual stated top priority of the Republican Party before President Obama's reelection in 2012 was to try to make him a one-term president. More than half of all Americans believed the obvious: that Republicans were actively sabotaging the economy with obstruction in their attempt to make President Obama fail. This was a high stakes game, and a cynically mean-spirited one in its practical effects. This was the top Republican priority primarily because they saw it as an effective scheme to appeal to people's dislike of paying taxes in order to help them win elections. This allows them to continue expanding perks for individuals with high incomes and high net worths, and further advance their self-serving agenda. And it has helped them with their goal of stacking the Supreme Court and federal courts nationwide with more than 200 conservative judges to ensure the continued supremacy of their power and control.

Newt Gingrich once provocatively referred to the social components of the Republican agenda as "right-wing social engineering". Surely this is the wrong direction for our country, for it circumscribes the freedoms of tens of millions of people, especially including women, and it makes our society less prosperous, less healthy, less secure and less cohesive.

Money talks, and if we "follow the money", we see that the Republican-controlled U.S. Senate and the Supreme Court narrowly approve of the overriding freedom of moneyed interests to corruptly dominate free speech. Meanwhile, in the face of huge challenges looming before us, we are failing to support sustainable public policies or to commit our country to fair-minded precepts like those proposed in this manifesto in a Bill of Rights for Future Generations. There is no question in my mind about the overarching need for such a new mechanism to guide our public decision-making, and to constrain the unconscionably irresponsible expediencies and short-term-oriented policies that are driving our nation and the world to ruin.

The proposed Bill of Rights for Future Generations would help ensure that we "pay forward" fairer provisions for people in the future, and sensibly prevent short-term-focused ideologies and narrow-mindedness from enabling wrong-headed national policies.

Good solutions exist to the daunting challenges that face us, and they are to be found in cooperation, not in stubbornly uncompromising politics and hubristic misuses of the levers of power. A comprehensive understanding of the Big Picture nature of the problems facing us, and of the hindrances obstructing good solutions, could provide us with a clear roadmap to smarter ways forward. This *Sad Implications* essay attempts to identify this roadmap to our figurative and perhaps quite literal salvation here on Earth.

Scrooge, Big Lies, and Real Economic Trends

Santa Claus tax reductions targeted to primarily benefit the rich, it turns out, are really a means of putting cold-hearted and miserly Ebenezer Scrooge sensibilities on a high pedestal of pretended righteousness. Those who emulate Scrooge tend to display uncompassionate attitudes and exploitive behaviors. In this sense, they seem to emulate Scrooge's spite "for Christmas and all things which give people happiness". The outcome of these efforts is to make our nation increasingly unfair and inequitable. This is an outrage against democratic fairness and humanitarian well-being. It is also an exceedingly cynical means by which to steal from future generations. Bah, humbug!

No matter how deceptively persuasive the propaganda is that claims it is the right thing to do to give more tax breaks to wealthy people, it is a Big Lie that such strategies will trickle down to lift all boats. In 1981, when Ronald Reagan began slashing taxes on high incomes and increasing spending on the military, and acting to deregulate banks and bust unions, the wealthiest 1% of Americans had about 20% of all wealth in the U.S. Today, after 40 years of supply-side economics and wave after wave of regressive changes in taxation, the wealthiest 1% of Americans have roughly DOUBLED their share of the nation's wealth.

Most damning of all, several authoritative economists have corroborated the stunning assertion made by presidential candidate Bernie Sanders that the top 0.1 percent of Americans have nearly as much wealth as the bottom 90 percent. In a speech to students at Liberty University, Sanders concluded, "And in your hearts, you will have to determine the morality of that, and the justice of that." If we really want liberty and justice for all in the United States of America, as so many people implicitly declare every time they recite the Pledge of Allegiance, then we cannot allow the wealthy to grab an ever increasing monopoly on the nation's wealth.

As the rich have gotten significantly richer, the majority of Americans who have the lowest earnings have experienced an actual inflation-adjusted decrease in their incomes since 1980. Almost all productivity gains in the U.S. economy in the past four decades have basically been given to the wealthy, with little going to workers. Prosperity has not been fairly shared in the least.

During this time, as the national debt has increased by well over \$25 trillion, it is clear that the tactic of cutting taxes on high incomes, capital gains, dividends, and rich kids' inheritances has resulted in a more extreme concentration of wealth in the hands of the few WITHOUT benefitting the many. It is stunningly clear that this outcome has been achieved by irresponsibly and unethically saddling our children and future generations with colossal amounts of debt.

Wall Street interests are gaining great advantages, while people on Main Street are being severely hurt. This is due to the fact that wealth and political power are so strongly correlated in our country. A narrow 5-4 majority of "conservatives" on the Supreme Court has been ruling since the Citizens United decision in January 2010 that money in politics should not be limited. One consequence of this is that increasing concentrations of wealth are being more easily translated into increasing concentrations of power -- and inevitably to more abuses of this power by corporations and CEOs and billionaires like Charles Koch and his system-corrupting ilk.

Some say that we have a system that gives us the choice between private plunder or public graft. We obviously could design a much fairer system through smart and far-reaching reforms!

"The true rule, in determining to embrace, or reject any thing, is not whether it have any evil in it; but whether it have more of evil, than of good."

--- Abraham Lincoln

"And so, my fellow Americans: ask not how our economic system can be rigged to be of greater personal benefit to you, ask what you can do to help make our nation fairer now. Ask how we can ensure that our world will remain propitious and providential for generations to come. Let us hear the ringing of the bells of individual freedom and responsibility, and thereby support this overarching cause, seeing it to be just, for it should be clear for whom the bell tolls, and it tolls for us all."

The Goal of Shock Doctrine Disaster Capitalism: Austerity for the Masses

The amount of federal debt per person in the United States is larger today than the debt per person in the nation of Greece, which is all but bankrupt. Austerity measures were imposed on Greece by European lenders and the International Monetary Fund after the 2008 financial crisis. They caused widespread unemployment, serious social unrest and violent protest demonstrations. Astoundingly, less than half of young people under the age of 25 had a job in Greece, a rate worse than the rate experienced at any time during the years of the terrible Depression of the 1930s in the United States. This situation was not only negative, but dangerous.

Austerity measures in the United States gained force after deficits spiked in the wake of the harsh recession of 2008-2009, and this led to spending cuts in federal, state and local governments. In 2020, with the pandemic

recession, record large relief expenditures are underway, and Trump Republicans refuse to bail out state and local governments, preferring to goose private profits and act to stoke stock market speculation.

Healthcare injustices are shockingly persistent and perilous, and getting drastically worse with the pandemic. Social inequities and costs of public education for university and college students have been dramatically increasing for years. These trends are causing social unrest to intensify, and are proving to be detrimental to the majority of Americans, and they introduce bigger risks of instability and reaction in our democracy.

Whenever stronger impetuses for austerity measures arise in America, the idea of "shared sacrifice" comes into sharper focus. Republicans propose that all the sacrifices should be made by workers and the middle class and the vast majority of Americans, and that NONE of the sacrifices should be shouldered by rich people. This is ridiculous! We can no longer afford to give so many benefits to the rich, and to make everyone else shoulder so many of the sacrifices.

Understand this issue in a big context. To rein in potentially catastrophic imbalances between tax revenues and government spending, the Santa Claus gravy train needs to be derailed. In doing so, all special interest groups must absorb some of the "sacrifice". Republicans insist that they will never compromise their principles, but they do this only because their highest value is to win at any cost and to have domineering power over the populace. If they severely harm the nation's prospects and Earth's magnificent ecosystems in the process, so be it, their actions imply.

This whole story makes P.J. O'Rourke's ironic observation seem incisively valid when he said, "The Republicans are the party that says that government doesn't work -- and then gets elected and proves it."

The Republican Party was once the bastion of small business owners and fiscally responsible national plans. No one would have been able to imagine, 50 years ago, that Republicans would become pushers for counterintuitive and demonstrably deceptive and unfair national policies and voodoo economics. Financing tax cuts for rich people and giant corporations by borrowing money is crazy. These are the two main groups that can afford to help our nation invest in a stronger and fairer country. Cutting taxes on the two groups that benefit most from these deceptive ideologies is dumb. Statistics and common sense and smart, empathetic and responsible fair-mindedness startlingly refute this strategy, because it is so contrary to the common good.

Americans should demand an end to this gamesmanship over tax cuts and government spending. We should recognize that both the underlying Santa Claus strategies of increasing spending and lowering taxes can no longer be acceptable national goals. Voters should scrupulously insist that fairer compromises be made.

This new variety of compromise should be an honest and visionary one that takes into account all the competing interests in this complex equation. The interests of our children and people in future generations should be given significantly greater weight because their prospects are being adversely affected by the short-term orientation of these expedencies. Think again how scandalous it is that we continue to borrow trillions of dollars from our descendants to stimulate the depletion of natural resources and allow toxins, pollutants and climate-disrupting greenhouse gases to be wantonly dumped into the commons. Think how wrong it is to allow profiteers to wreak practically irreversible damages on Earth's vital ecosystems.

Common sense and right understanding and visionary perspectives can coincide. Now is the time to embrace these healthier perspectives and act to make our nation a better place!

Mark Twain expressed moral outrage at wickedness in his times. He derided the gluttony of the Gilded Age and criminal malfeasance in the business world, and voiced strong opposition to American military adventurism abroad, and mocked people's absurd foibles and peccadilloes. It is healthy for us to laugh at the foolishness of our similar foibles in today's world. But while we are chuckling to our selves, we should remember that our most important legacy to our heirs should be to "pay forward" better deeds to offset the harms that our collective activities are causing to their prospects, and to the health of planetary ecosystems. Let's just do it!

A Revealing Aside Concerning Karl Rove

Karl Rove is another Machiavellian character in the Republican trenches. In the book *Bush's Brain: How Karl Rove Made George W. Bush Presidential*, the authors analyze the effect that Karl Rove had on shaping the policies of the Executive Branch from 2001 to 2007. Rove was Bush's Senior Advisor in the White House, and was known for his role as master strategist in the retrogressive social and financial fiasco of the Bush years. After his tenure in the White House, Karl Rove became, according to the insightful journalist Bill Moyers, "a mover and shaker of the money tree for the corporate-conservative complex". Rove raised hundreds of millions of dollars from wealthy people in 2012 for Super PACS that tried to defeat President Obama.

Tellingly, Rove's favorite historical figure was Mark Hanna, a wealthy Cleveland businessman and political operative back in the Gilded Age of the late 19th century. During this "degenerate and unlovely age", as one historian described it, Mark Hanna was the first modern political fund-raiser. He famously said, "There are two things that are important in politics. The first thing is money, and I can't remember what the second one is."

Mark Hanna was depicted by one cartoonist as "Dollar Mark," a prototype of plutocracy and hardball politics. Hanna tapped railroads, banks, insurance companies and wealthy industrialists like oil baron John Rockefeller for enough money to get William McKinley elected governor of Ohio. After that, Hanna was instrumental in raising ten times more money in the 1896 presidential election than his populist opponent William Jennings Bryan, helping ensure that William McKinley was elected president.

Mark Hanna believed that "the state of Ohio existed for property. It had no other function ... Great wealth was to be gained through monopoly, through using the State for private ends; it was axiomatic therefore that businessmen should run it for personal profit." He and McKinley therefore saw to it that first Ohio and then the federal government were "ruled by business ... by bankers, railroads, and public utility corporations." The U.S. Senate was infamous as "a millionaire's club," and "City halls, state houses and even courtrooms were bought and sold like baubles."

"Instead of enforcing the rules of fair play, government served as a valet to the plutocrats," according to Bill Moyers in a speech he gave in November 2010 at Boston University. In the speech, which commemorated the life and legacy of the late great historian Howard Zinn, Moyers mentioned that McKinley "governed negligently in the interests of big business", despite many Americans being "outraged at the rapacity and shenanigans of the monopolies, trusts and corporations that were running roughshod over ordinary Americans."

Moyers compelling speech continued:

The young journalist Henry George had written that "an immense wedge" was being forced through American society by "the maldistribution of wealth, status, and opportunity." Now inequality exploded into what the historian Clinton Rossiter described as "the great train robbery of American intellectual history." Conservatives of the day -- pro-corporate apologists -- hijacked the vocabulary of Jeffersonian liberalism and turned words like "progress," "opportunity," and "individualism" into tools for making the plunder of America sound like a divine right. Laissez faire ideologues and neo-cons of the day -- lovers of empire even then -- hijacked Charles Darwin's theory of evolution and so distorted it that judges, politicians and publicists gleefully embraced the notion that progress emerges from the "survival of the fittest" and the elimination of the weak. As one of the plutocrats crowed: "We are rich. We own America. We got it, God knows how, but we intend to keep it."

And they have never given up. The Gilded Age has returned with a vengeance in our time. It slipped in quietly at first, back in the early 1980s, when Ronald Reagan began a "massive decades-long transfer of national wealth to the rich." As Roger Hodge makes clear, under Bill Clinton the transfer was even more dramatic, as the top 10 percent captured an ever-growing share of national income. The trend continued under George W. Bush -- those huge tax cuts for the rich, remember, which are now about to be extended (this was in the year 2010) because both parties have been bought off by the wealthy -- and by 2007 the wealthiest 10% of Americans were taking in 50% of the national income. Today, a fraction of people at the top today earns more than the bottom 120 million Americans.

You will hear it said, "Come on, this is the way the world works." No, it's the way the world is *made to work*. This vast inequality is not the result of Adam Smith's invisible hand; it did not just happen; it was no accident. As Hodge drives home, it is the result of a long series of policy decisions "about industry and trade, taxation and military spending, by flesh-and-blood humans sitting in concrete-and-steel buildings." And those policy decisions were paid for by roughly one percent of Americans who make political contributions in our capitalist democracy.

Look how it works under Trump Republicans. Inequities have become drastically more extreme.

Republican Leadership - An Especially Shrewd Coalition of Dunce-Like Leaders

Senator Mitch McConnell wields a lot of power. It is revealing that this man from Kentucky gloats about having basically undermined our democratic republic through his staunch opposition to campaign finance reforms. The truth is that the American people would be far better served by being allowed to have more influence, and that the influence of rich people and multinational corporations should be more sensibly limited.

Mark Twain was sure right when he said that politicians are bought by special interests in the United States. Unfortunately, this trend has become much worse in recent decades.

Mitch McConnell is a right-wing Republican who is the veritable epitome of outlandish corruption in our politics. He reputedly takes great pride in displaying nearly 200 political cartoons on the walls of his Capitol office that ridicule his Machiavellian opposition against common sense initiatives that would limit the corrupting influence of Big Money in our politics. He definitely represents the American people extremely poorly.

McConnell is ideologically reactionary on the issue of Big Money in politics, but he prefers being regarded as "pragmatic". Like almost every Republican in Congress, he is staunchly opposed to even the insipid accountability of requiring the disclosure of who is bankrolling the obfuscating tsunami of political propaganda that sways the public to elect such unethical leaders. Republican opposition persists despite the fact that 97% of groups paying for election ads in 2008 disclosed the names of their donors, but only 32% made similar disclosures in 2010 (according to the Federal Election Commission). There is something insidiously wrongheaded about allowing increasing amounts of "dark money" and secrecy and a lack of transparency in our democracy!

McConnell's opposition is strictly for political gain. Yes, this is pragmatism, all right -- but it is a form of pragmatism that is highly unethical and unscrupulous. It is a shrewd form of pragmatism that is focused on highly unfair principles that are antagonistic to the greater good of working people and the general public and our children. McConnell's pragmatism is in actuality a form of influence peddling and institutionalized bribery. It is corruption. It is truly No Change We Can Believe In. No No No! It is a sad day for the American people that we have not yet booted McConnell from office!

The late Charles Krauthammer -- what a name for a neoconservative! -- expressed the opinion after the tax compromise in December 2010 that extended the Bush tax cuts that it would act as "Stimulus II" and would boost the probability that President Obama would be re-elected in 2012 by stimulating the economy and lowering the unemployment rate. The jobless rate did go down, and this may have been a factor that contributed to Obama's re-election, but in any case I'd have to agree with Krauthammer on an adjunct point he made: the costly compromise made "a mockery of the Republican's newfound, second-chance, post-Bush, Tea-Party, this-time-we're-serious persona of debt-averse fiscal responsibility."

Remember that statistics prove a surprising fact: the national debt has consistently increased under Republican presidents more than it has under Democratic presidents since the 1970s. We cannot trust the Republican rhetoric that claims they are the most fiscally responsible party. All of this is enough to make one want to cry, like John Boehner occasionally used to do in public. But Mr. Boehner, the Republican Majority Leader in the House of Representatives until he was forced to give up the position in October 2015, does not deserve much sympathy for his tears. We need not just figuratively cry for Argentina anymore, Evita, because we really should be crying for the American people, and for our heirs in the future, and indeed for the prospects of a healthy environment and biological diversity on Earth. And we should staunch our tears, and resolve to take action to change course and honestly work to propitiously alter the pernicious Trumpian status quo.

Representative Barbara Lee's Point of View

"We lose ourselves when we compromise the very ideals that we fight to defend. And we honor those ideals by upholding them not when it is easy, but when it is hard."

--- President Barack Obama in his Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech

Tax-cutting measures have been compromising the hopes and potential prosperity of millions of people, now and in the future. Deficit spending allows us to collectively avoid making the difficult decisions we really should be making today. The 2010 compromise between President Obama and McConnell violated the idealistic vision of fairness and reform that the president was elected to pursue. The liberal Representative Barbara Lee noted of the tax deal, after the House had approved it on 12/16/10: "It's a shame and a disgrace. We know who's going to pay. It's going to be on the backs of low-income people, the working poor, communities of color."

Then again, what does Barbara Lee know? She was the single solitary voice, out of all the 535 members of Congress, who went on the record to oppose giving George W. Bush and Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld the absolute power to launch wars against entire nations in the Middle East, when she cast a NO! vote on September 14, 2001 in the horrified, fearful and angry wake of 9/11.

Nineteen years later we are able to have a calmer and more rational perspective. As the Nobel prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz pointed out, the wars we launched after 9/11 in Afghanistan and Iraq will cost more than \$3 trillion, once all costs are factored in. That's a hell of a lot of money! This will include the costs of healthcare for the veterans of the wars and interest expenses on national debt related to borrowings incurred to finance the wars. Stiglitz conveyed his estimates in a book about the Iraq War called *The Three Trillion Dollar War: The True Cost of the Iraq Conflict*.

Think about this. The attack on Iraq and the subsequent long-term U.S. occupation was military adventurism undertaken because the war in Afghanistan proved to involve inadequately rich targets. If, instead of launching the war on Iraq, we had invested this money in domestic needs and good neighbor policies, not only would we have saved thousands of lives of American soldiers and hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, and a pile of money, but we could have avoided energizing extremists and antagonizing the more than one billion adherents of Islam, the world's second most populous religion. We could have invested in healthcare-for-all and the security and well-being of American communities. We could have afforded more effective programs to create greater fairness of opportunity in public education and employment. We could have invested in greater independence from our addiction to polluting fossil fuels. We could have provided very attractive incentives to corporations to keep millions of manufacturing and service jobs at home instead of helping export them abroad.

We could have taken much smarter steps to improve conditions in the world so that the causes contributing to radicalism would not result in terrorism, reactive blowback and exacerbated insecurity. The smartest and most economical steps would be to make investments in reducing marginalized people's feelings of alienation, lacking opportunity, being discriminated against, and being humiliated. Heck, we could have made the USA a great country again, and prevented the powerful anti-establishment sentiments roiled the U.S. in 2016 and gave the divisive con man authoritarian demagogue Donald Trump a chance to grab and abuse power!

We could have increased good-guy foreign aid by engaging in respectful diplomacy and international cooperation, and by investing in peacebuilding initiatives and humanitarian projects focused on reducing poverty. We could have had enough money to set up a robust fund to mitigate the increasingly costly and highly disruptive impacts that colossal quantities of greenhouse gas emissions are causing every year as a result of human activities. We could have acted to offset the increasing concentration of these heat-trapping gases in Earth's atmosphere by helping developing countries significantly slow the rate of deforestation on our beautiful home planet. Shucks, we could even have reduced the risky level of deficit spending we have incurred since 9/11!

Security: Freedom versus Equality

Freedom is the bedrock of our great American experiment in democratic self-government. Recall Janis Joplin famously belting out these lyrics: "Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose." That is an exceedingly curious idea in our materialistic society, but one thing seems perfectly clear to me: to borrow huge sums of money is a risk-laden and shortsighted expediency when the money is squandered rather than being well invested. This

irresponsible gambit could portend that instead of greater freedom, most Americans will suffer increasing insecurity, stress, anxiety and hardship. Austerity and exacerbated inequalities and further economic disruptions are consequently lurking ahead.

National security is one of the most basic and important of all government purposes. One definition of security is the freedom from risk or danger. Another meaning is the freedom from doubt, anxiety or fear. The economic course we have been collectively charting since Ronald Reagan was inaugurated in 1981 has been one of insidiously growing economic insecurity for the vast majority of the American people. This has been caused by the staunch adherence by politicians, and those they serve, to national priorities that emphasize high levels of spending on the military and entitlements. This extravagant spending has been coupled with tax cuts and corporate subsidies, and tax and regulatory loopholes, all designed to increase inequalities between the well-to-do few and the mightily-struggling many.

Increases in inequality are contrary to the Founding principle expressed in the American Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal." Increasing inequality causes increased economic insecurity among the masses and more stress, longer work hours, worse poverty, more crime and the need for more spending on prisons. It also creates an incrementally greater probability of destabilizing change, even possibly of revolution, if reasonable reforms are not made to create a fairer society. It is incumbent upon us to find a better strategy than continuously caving in to excessively greedy, stingy and ruthless demands by the moneyed class. Honest executive leadership and legislative reform are needed now!

Increasing Concentration of Stupidity Takes Humanity by Force

Sad Implications originally contained a story about my friend El Gaviero, and about the Goddess of Poetic Justice. This story has been moved to *Happy Harbingers in Good Ideas for a Better Future*. After moving that, I looked around for a way to make an intuitive transition herein from the paragraphs above to the ones below. I decided a new focus was needed on the increasing concentrations of wealth, power and uncompromising foolishness in our society today. Santa Claus strategies, after all, are big contributors to these twisted things.

I began to reminisce about past opinions I've expressed, and how strong my conviction is that there actually is a bright silver lining to all the dark clouds that are gathering on our human and biotic horizons. And all my ruminations led back to the idea that it is a bad plan to let rich people abuse power.

So why is it that we allow wealthy people to misuse the power of their money to get more and more of the national wealth for themselves? The richest 1% of Americans has already doubled their share of the national wealth in recent decades, for Christ's sake! In absolute dollar terms, the wealth of the top 1% of people has increased by probably \$30 trillion.

The Trump Republican Tax Cut law reduced taxes on corporations from 35% to 21%. Since the lion's share of this boost in corporate net income is going to the top 1%, the richest Americans will own more than half of the nation's wealth in the not distant future. How much more can they grab before a powerful movement arises that unequivocally demands greater fairness, or even a measure of civil restitution? Or revolutionary fervor.

This increasing concentration of wealth is obscene in light of gambits by multinational corporations to get the government to allow private interests to gain bigger profits by externalizing severe costs onto society. An increasing concentration of wealth is also unethical from the standpoint that this scheme is causing a more serious subversion of our democracy and democratic principles. The fact that this is harming prospects of people in future generations by mortgaging their future with unprecedented amounts of debt makes the situation even worse.

We collectively face epic fiscal, social, demographic, moral and environmental challenges. It is starkly misguided to allow the wealthy to gain more and more of the nation's common wealth in light of the ever-more-difficult problems that the majority of Americans face in their struggle to make ends meet. This situation is getting worse as jealous rich people increase their share of the national wealth and abuse the power of their influence while everyone else endures more intense hardships in dozens of significant and measurable ways.

"Damn compromise!", say rich people to all of our representatives. "We want freedom, not taxes. Just wait, and prosperity will trickle down to everyone. Our policies guarantee it."

God hardened the heart of the oppressive Pharaoh in ancient Egypt when Moses asked for his people to be set free from the bitter bondage of their labors. The children of Israel asked for three days off from their work to journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to the LORD their God to appease Him, but God hardened the heart of the Pharaoh over and over again, according to the Exodus story, so the Pharaoh commanded the Egyptian taskmasters to lay more work upon the men, who he accused of being lazy for wanting time off work. Sadly, conservatives today emulate that onerous Pharaoh.

"I don't mind going to work, but the thing about having to wait 8 hours to go home is really bullshit!"

--- A photo of a humorous workplace sign on the Internet. Ha!

If God is still hanging around these days and supervising human affairs, "He" is up to his old tricks of hardening the hearts of the rulers and taskmasters, in order that they may prosper at the expense of the people. Redeem us, oh Lord, with great judgments. The lack of empathy associated with greed-driven, sink-or-swim capitalism and Strict Father domination are unconscionably unfair and pathologically pathetic. Let's change this! In commendable contrast, after Justin Trudeau was newly elected to lead Canada, he promised to shift the burden of taxes off the middle class, and his progressive plan is likely to improve the general welfare of all Canadians.

The Impasse of Politics in America Today

Republican Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell stated in late June 2011 that tax increases are "politically impossible". He stubbornly refused to allow any revenue increases to be part of a debt-cutting agreement as another national debt-limit ceiling approached. What baloney! With taxes on wealthy people at the lowest rates in generations and very high amounts of deficit spending and record levels of national debt, and with Republican refusals to compromise on rich people's ever-greater perks, our political system is badly broken.

Our tax system is a hornet's nest of absurd tax loopholes like the one mentioned previously which allows hedge fund managers who earn hundreds of millions of dollars per year to pay low capital gains tax rates on their enormous earnings. This "carried interest" provision will cost \$20 billion over the next decade. It is astonishing that anyone can defend such a glaringly generous provision for a few influence abusers who exhibit such defiant airs of unprincipled self-righteous deservedness.

In the August 2011 debt showdown, Republicans tried to extort some serious concessions from unions, workers and old people before agreeing to another increase in the debt limit. At the same time, they stuck stubbornly to their Santa Claus tax cut ideologies in vehemently opposing any higher taxes on the highest income earners. They held the nation hostage in their attempt to make President Obama fail, even though it hurt working people and our economy and the global economy in the process. "A default might be a good thing", said some Tea Party types in the summer of 2011 and again in October 2013, despite the fact that it would probably have cost trillions of dollars in immediate stock market losses worldwide.

Economic precautionary principles indicate that we should be honest about the growing risk of a severe debt crisis, and consequently act boldly to forestall the danger. It is deeply perplexing that the main plan Republicans have pushed to deal with the increasing national debt is to make the problem more severe by significantly cutting the top tax rate on the highest income earners. Lower government revenues will force deep cuts to Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and other areas of discretionary federal government spending.

In these pandemic times, it is astonishing to remember Republican talk of balanced budgets back during President Obama's tenure in office. Mitch McConnell had just remarked that it is politically impossible to implement any tax increases, and then he stood in front of national cameras in late June 2011 and audaciously declared that a balanced budget amendment should be passed. Talk about "politically impossible"! To enact an Amendment to the Constitution, two-thirds approval is required in both the U.S. Senate and the House, and three-quarters of all State legislatures must ratify it. It would be much more challenging to get this passed than to agree to fairer compromises on increases in taxes on incomes in excess of \$250,000 and other initiatives like eliminating tax loopholes and, corporate subsidies, and cracking down on tax evasion schemes.

Balanced budgets cannot realistically be achieved without more tax revenues. If Congress made radical reductions in spending for the military and entitlements and a wide range of important government functions, we still would

not be able to balance the budget without more revenues, because large spending cuts would cause severe economic dislocations, and a worse recession would result from big cuts in government spending on a scale adequate to balance the budget. In any case, it is a recipe for fiscal disaster to continue to have inadequate levels of government revenue to pay for current levels of spending.

Besides, it would be ridiculous and inflexibly risky to set a balanced budget requirement in concrete for each year, instead of allowing the federal government the flexibility to manage the economy more intelligently in accordance with business cycles. The devil, as they say, is always in the details. A balanced budget amendment is a backhanded and disingenuous approach to avoid making actual specific decisions on how to reduce budget deficits. Almost all economists agree that balancing the budget by slashing government spending and increasing taxes during times of recession is dangerously counterproductive and could lead to higher joblessness and a more severe economic downturn.

One pundit proposed an Unbalanced Budget Amendment. This would be a Constitutional Amendment that would make practical sense by requiring budget surpluses in good economic times to offset the counter-cyclical fiscal policy of deficit spending stimulus during recessionary times. That is a much better idea than the hypocritical gamesmanship of Senator McConnell's grandstanding proposal. Good recommendations are made in the Earth Manifesto on how to fairly and sensible balance the federal budget. See *One Dozen Initiatives to Positively Make America Great Again*, in particular.

Fascinating Words Written by President Dwight Eisenhower

I again think of the resounding warning expressed by Republican President Dwight Eisenhower in 1954 that addressed the need for what he called "moderation" in government, and his assertion about how "stupid" and disastrous it would be for any political party to try to turn back the clock and eliminate basic social safety net assurances and labor laws.

A new calculus has come to dominate political conservatism today. Since Big Money has become the key to "success" in politics, and because perceptions of reality can be easily shaped and manipulated by devious rhetoric, attack ads and repetitious negative propaganda, political operatives in conservative circles seem to believe they can ignore Eisenhower's cautionary words and only pretend to care about their constituents concerns -- while mainly championing the anti-social agenda of conservative billionaires. It is reprehensible that they try to get away with these things by taking advantage of hot button social issues like God, guns, gays, abortion and immigration and refugees. I encourage voters to prove them wrong in all future election contests.

Wearing blinders during these 21st century *Years of Living Dangerously* is almost certain to turn out badly for the people and for the self-deluded and deceiving politicians themselves. The demographics are against this narrow-minded, anti-inclusive and fundamentally wrong-headed approach, and so is reality itself, for erroneous ideological economic prescriptions -- like those pushed by the consortium affiliated with the Wichita Kansas Koch billionaires -- have a way of resulting in negative outcomes, and overly "pro-business" policies turn out to be bad for both businesses and the people.

Former Kansas Governor Sam Brownback conveniently provided proof of these understandings while he was in office, with his radical experiment in cutting taxes. Koch Industries was the single largest donor to getting Brownback elected during his career, and Charles and David Koch reaped huge benefits from their investment by paying 25% less in state taxes on their enormous earnings, thanks to the tax cuts Brownback put into effect when he first got into the Governor's office. But this Santa Claus tax cut strategy has proved to be disastrous to the majority of people in Kansas.

Surprisingly, many Republican politicians in recent years have continued to brazenly push to slash spending on social safety net programs. It would seem that this is a political kamikaze act, but it becomes feasible because our democracy has become so corruptly obedient to the desires of the top 1% of income earners. This is why politicians from both political parties are able to vastly over-represent the desires of moneyed interests and under-represent the interests of the majority of people.

"As a result of Republican-driven tax cuts, a travesty of social justice is taking place in which the rich are getting richer while the nation's infrastructure is falling apart, public schools are deteriorating, prisons are overcrowded, inner cities are getting more gritty, and the majority of people are seeing their life fortunes and prospects diminish. Since our Congressional, Executive and Judicial systems are so strongly influenced by the corrupting influence of Big Money, the greater good is being undermined and fair representation of the interests of the majority are being torpedoed. As a result, radically anti-egalitarian national policies and priorities have gained sway."

Make no mistake about it. The reckless ballooning of the national debt is serious. The solutions proposed by Republicans are ideological false choices that are contrary to the fairness principles upon which our nation was founded. We should reduce budget deficits, and we do need to implement fairer tax policies and spending plans. It is not impossible. Let's get it together! Thomas Piketty says we should enact a wealth tax to correct the extreme imbalances. And let's not forget the overarching context of the need for a fair-minded Bill of Rights for Future Generations in these considerations.

In response to the bursting of the housing bubble and the severe financial crisis of 2008, a recession began and unemployment skyrocketed. The Federal Reserve and the federal government were forced to resort to drastic economic stimulus measures to prevent another Depression. It was an inopportune and risky time to cut back on either Santa Claus spending or Santa Claus tax cuts. So the record deficit spending of the Bush years became much higher deficit spending under the first years of the Obama administration.

Now we need to have the sense to find common cause to move toward a comprehensive solution to this epic economic challenge. This must involve intelligently controlled government spending as well as higher marginal tax rates on all incomes in excess of \$250,000 per year, with progressively higher rates for income over \$1 million per year and even higher rates for income over \$5 million per year. The Bush Santa Claus tax cuts should be ended, and the tax rate on capital gains should be increased. So should the amount of taxes on the less than 1% of inheritances that are big enough to be subject to any estate taxes at all. And corporate subsidies and agribusiness farm subsidies and many of the loopholes in the tax code should be reduced.

We could sensibly control government spending without slashing spending on vital programs like education, environmental protections, National Parks, emergency first-responders, family planning, public broadcasting, and the nation's physical infrastructure. We should reduce spending on wars, war services, weapons, troops stationed abroad, and military occupations. We should reform entitlement spending in ways suggested in *Radically Simple Ways to Make America Fairer, and to Fix Both Social Security and Health Care So We Can Move On to Address Much Bigger Issues*. There are surprisingly simple and fair ways to achieve these reforms.

Conclusion: The Rule of Two Impossibles in Human Affairs

When something is declared politically impossible, yet the alternative option is proved to be impossible to an equal or greater degree, the first impossibility becomes curiously more feasible. Intransigent Republican adherence to the goal of providing huge tax cuts to rich people may make it "politically impossible" to achieve fair-minded compromises, as Mitch McConnell has declared, but this can be seen to be a kind of brinkmanship that is likely to become untenable because it is really a form of national political and economic suicide.

To ravage the social security safety net even further just to continue padding the bank accounts of the wealthy, and to continue pandering so one-sidedly to power-abusing factions, are courses of action that seem likely to be more counterproductive than finding good ways to curb extreme inequities in our society.

Let us debate these issues honestly, and chart a future course that is fairer to the majority of Americans and all our heirs in future generations. Let's have a truly honest conversation about resource conservation. Let's be honest with each other -- and with ourselves, too. Let's sort out special interest considerations and focus on the greater common good. We can no longer accept short-term oriented profiteering as being more important than longer-term considerations of the greater good. New farsighted priorities are required.

Revolutionary changes are needed to make sure our ship of state is on course toward a healthier future. We cannot continue to pursue an unsteady course toward dangerous shoals of converging ecological, economic, political, social and demographic catastrophes.

King Louis XV of France accurately foresaw the approaching turmoil that later resulted in the French Revolution of 1789. "Après moi, le deluge", he said. He was aware of the irresponsible extravagances of his royal court and the huge expenses related to decades of warfare. Today, we are facing an even greater deluge of debt and costly militarism. In addition, far-reaching demographic challenges beset our societies and ecological disasters and refugee crises loom before us, and yet we are acting as if we can't do anything about it. We are acting as if, "Après nous, le deluge viendra." (After us, the deluge will come.)

I feel strongly that we must act on our best understandings and work together with overarching commitment to prevent economic, environmental and climatic disasters from severely affecting us and our heirs in the future.

A new Enlightenment Era may be dawning, an era shaped by awareness of our interconnectedness and interdependence with other people and natural systems. Moral propriety, Golden Rule fairness and social cohesion make it mandatory that we incorporate intergenerational fairness into our national policies. It is becoming increasingly important for us to work together to create a system that is more holistic, more likely sustainable, and more responsible to the protection of healthy planetary ecosystems and other people and other species of life. We can do this. We must do this. Let's start NOW!

Truly,

Dr. Tiffany B. Twain

Sept. 1, 2020 (The first version was published in January 2012, and has been revised sporadically since.)