

The gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) is willing to cut however many communities he needs to cut in Texas, to split up communities that have been together since the beginning of our State, if that is what it takes to get him more votes. The question that several of my colleagues have been asking throughout Washington today is whether there has been a going over the limits with reference to using Federal resources in order to further that political agenda. And the reason those questions were raised were comments from Mr. DELAY: his indication that he had a former Justice Department official working on it in his office; that he had a United States Attorney working on it in Texas; that he thought the FBI and the U.S. marshals ought to be pulled into this.

Well, where are we today? Our colleague, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. TURNER), the ranking Democrat on the Select Committee on Homeland Security, this morning sought to get the information about whether the Homeland Security Department had been used for political purposes. He was stonewalled. This afternoon, our colleague, the gentlewoman from Houston, Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE), sought to get similar information from the Justice Department. She also was unable to get an answer. And the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) has been strangely quiet.

The security level of our Nation, the danger to our families, goes up. Comments from Mr. DELAY? They go down.

I think the public has a right to know whatever it is that they are so determined to cover up. If this was merely a routine law enforcement request, they do not need an inspector general. Just release the tapes and the other related documents so that everyone can see. Instead, they have ducked and dodged and tried to assign the investigation to a political functionary.

This weekend, the latest chapter in all of this. Instead of responding directly to a communication from 16 Members of Congress to release these documents, we got excerpts of tapes. We got an indication that a gentleman named Clark Kent Irvin was going to be the inspector general who would tidy all this up, investigate it, and give us a fair and complete report as to whether anything had gone amiss. And the Department of Homeland Security indicated in comments to several newspapers around the country that they were mighty proud of Clark. They thought he could do a really good job of this and pointed to his recent work in service to this administration.

What they did not point out was that Mr. Irvin is a perennial Republican candidate, having run for Congress and tried to become a member of the delegation of the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY); having run in what later was an aborted race for the Houston City Council; having run for State representative; and having failed in these several runs for elective office, then began to take a series of Republican patronage jobs.

To his credit, after inquires from the press yesterday and another letter that a number of us sent from the Texas delegation, Mr. Irvin has withdrawn himself from the investigation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. REYES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. REYES addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Ms. CARSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. CARSON of Indiana addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE DEBT CEILING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. HILL) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. HILL. Mr. Speaker, the Blue Dogs are going to be taking this hour to talk about the debt ceiling. And for those who are listening, the Blue Dogs are about 35 Democrats in the House of Representatives who believe that we ought to be fiscally responsible. The debt ceiling, for those who are listening, too, is a process by which we pass a budget and we say that we are going to pay for items in the budget. And if we do not have the money to pay for the items in the budget, then we have to borrow the money.

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That takes an act of law. About 7 or 8 months ago, we did not have enough money, so we raised the debt ceiling by approximately \$450 billion. Now 7 or 8 months later, to fast forward to today, we are going to have to do it again. We are going to have to raise it \$984 billion. This is at the same time that a conference committee in these halls of Congress are debating a multi-billion dollar tax cut. Many of us are not in agreement with that, but there are many in this body and the other body that believe that we should borrow the money in order to do a tax cut.

In President Bush's State of the Union address, the President said, "This country has many problems. We will not deny, we will not ignore, we will not pass along our problems to other Congresses, to other Presidents and other generations." I am quoting from the President of the United States. But that is precisely what we are doing in our current budget and economic policies.

The House majority is trying to hide a \$984 billion increase in the debt limit, the largest increase in the debt limit in history. This comes less than 8 months

after we raised the Federal debt ceiling by a whopping \$450 billion. When the President proposed his initial budget in the year 2001, the administration actually claimed there was a danger that the government would pay off its debt by the public too quickly. The administration's request for the second increase in the statutory debt limit is less than a year and shows just how farfetched those warnings were. The majority no doubt hopes that this increase in the debt limit is large enough to avoid dealing with the issue of our increasing national debt until after the election next year.

If the majority honestly believes that tax cuts with borrowed money is good economic policy, they should be willing to vote to increase the national debt to pay for their tax cuts, instead of relying on undercover, parliamentary tricks.

We Blue Dogs are firmly opposed to increasing the borrowing authority by \$984 billion without efforts to restore fiscal discipline into the future and protect taxpayers from higher and higher debt. We understand that we have to borrow monies sometimes to pay our debts, and we feel like we should do the responsible thing and do that, but there ought to be some kind of road map put in place for the American people so we can see somewhere down the line how we are going to get out of this mess, and we are not doing that.

The one tax that cannot be repealed is the debt tax, the cost of paying interest on our national debt. The debt tax consumed 18 percent of all government revenues to pay interest on the \$6.4 trillion national debt last year, including interest on debt held by government trust funds.

We are willing, as I said before, to support a short-term increase in the debt ceiling to avoid the impending risk of default, but we will not support an increase in the debt limit of nearly a trillion dollars to allow the government to continue on the course of deficits as far as the eye can see. It is irresponsible to provide a blank check for increased borrowing authority without examination of the conditions that make such an increase necessary. Just like a credit card spending limit serves as a tool to force families to examine their household budget, the debt limit reminds our Nation to evaluate taxing and spending policies.

A farmer or small businessman who needs an extension of their credit must work with the bank to establish a financial plan in order to get approval from the bank. We should be following that principle by working on putting our budget back in order before we raise our credit limit.

A thorough debate on lifting the debt ceiling is particularly timely as Congress considers tax cuts that could add more than a trillion dollars to the national debt over the next decade. Every dime of tax cuts being pushed by the majority will come from borrowed