

Utah voters have been betrayed by their congressional delegation

Utah Senator Bill Hickman

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For years we've supported our congressional delegation. We believed them when they told us that seniority was important. When they told us Utah would be in a prime position to lead on the issues that matter - if we would only give them a few more years in office - we believed them. We invested our votes and we invested years of our time.

What happened? What have they done with the seniority we allowed them? They have squandered it like foolish children. They worried about staying in power to the point that they neglected to perform their fundamental mission. They betrayed all of us.

Congress overspends. The deficit accumulates and the interest compounds into what we have now - a national debt of almost \$9.5 trillion, which encumbers my kids and grandkids. Every one of my grandchildren was born \$30,000 in debt due to congressional dereliction of duty. We plainly have more government than we can afford, yet our elected delegation shirks the disciplined work of limiting spending to income.

Our senators and congressmen are derelict in other areas as well. The trade deficit is staggering. Between our budget deficit and the trade deficit, we are sitting on a ticking time bomb. The increase in fuel prices is directly connected to the plummeting value of the dollar.

Members of Congress have taken upon themselves the management of our school systems in which they have no constitutional role, yet they neglect border security - which is clearly a federal task. The ridiculous list of shame goes on to include earmarks, the war, the housing and credit crisis, and a thousand smaller crises that naturally arise from a leader's abandonment of duty.

This is a dangerous situation that saps American vitality and opportunity. It limits the realm of our possibility. It throws power to foreign lenders. This behavior is anti-Republican and pretty damn un-American. For decades our leaders in Congress blamed the other party. Then, suddenly, from 2002 to 2006, our party was in charge. We controlled both chambers of Congress and the presidency. We had power to change our course. The nation needed leadership.

Congressmen: You failed to do your duty and you broke your trust with the people of Utah. I'm looking at you, Sen. Hatch.

Congress has failed to act as a check and a balance to the executive branch. Like impotent, self-important bulls in a china shop, they have shattered liberties paid for by the best blood of the past several hundred years. They did so while mouthing patriotic soundbites like sheep. They built up counterfeits of genuine patriotism and true security and worshiped at that altar while the nation crumbled.

Let me ask a question we all should have been asking long ago.

If Congress is neither a check nor a balance; if it increases our debt each day it controls the budget; if its members fail to carry out the responsibilities for which they were chartered, yet clumsily usurp work that others are doing better and less expensively; if they fiddle while our liberty and economy burn; if, by both action and inaction, they increase the danger to

which each American citizen is subjected; if they are guilty of all these things - and they are as guilty as sin - then I ask:

Why are they still there? Why do we still pay for them? Are they any different than the class of royal power we divested in 1776?

I want my money back. I want my vote back. I want the years our state has invested in these congressmen returned to us all. I want a change in D.C. If our congressional delegation cannot turn it around, I want leaders who can.

I am proud of Utah. We have an army of talented leaders who are sharp, seasoned, energetic and wide-awake. We are consistently rated one of the best-managed states in the nation. Our budget is balanced. Utah is the best place to start a business and raise a family.

This is due, in large part, to keen-minded, innovative leaders with a lot of common sense. You probably know a dozen such. So why do we keep sending Orrin Hatch and Bob Bennett back to Washington? They are not our A Team. We can do better.

America's problems are complex, but Americans can do complex things. We can overcome monumental challenges. I have come to believe, however, that the solution to this one starts at the ballot box.

I have served in the Utah Legislature for 16 years, but I'm not running for re-election. A man with nothing to lose is sometimes inclined to speak the truth. Bottom line: We have all been cheated. I think we should cut our losses and start over.

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