



Good government, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder

By Jim Waters

The choices between big spending and responsible leadership have always existed.

But sometimes the lines get blurred or disappear altogether as the sands of political expediency shift and the clamor of big-government statisticians drown out calls for responsible stewardship.

Hard times have a way of magnifying those choices, and an example of that from Kentucky's Washington delegation recently appeared in *The Kentucky Gazette*.

In one column on Page 16, a Kentucky U.S. Senator bemoans: ["We are spending our nation's future into the abyss."](#)

He wrote that by 2020, the cost of the national debt "will jump to \$248,700 per child under the age of 18. . . . As a country we have to make hard decisions when it comes to entitlement programs. Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security will continue to drain our resources."

"Hard decisions?" "Spending our nation's future into the abyss?" "We've got to do something about Social Security, the third rail of politics?" Not exactly a warm-and-fuzzy campaign platform.

But voters want the cold, hard facts. Most are fed up with high taxes, overspending, an inept, grossly expensive education system and deaf politicians. Incumbents ignore this at their peril.

Yet some do.

Also on Page 16 — right next to the Senator's statement lamenting our nation's fiscal crisis — a Louisville congressman spent his entire allotted space talking about how much taxpayer-funded bacon he brings home.

He bragged about how Kentucky would receive millions in additional federal stimulus money and [said](#), "this new funding brings the total amount of Recovery Act dollars the Commonwealth has received from the U.S. Department of Education to more than \$1.14 billion."

So what did the congressman think would be the end result of all this "stimulating" spending?

"With this investment, our nation is guaranteeing our students have the resources to receive a high-quality education while maintaining the highest skilled workforce in the world."

Wow! Really?

I wonder if he knows:

- Kentucky's 10.6 percent [unemployment rate](#) is more than a percentage point higher than the national average?

- In [Jefferson County](#), local school taxes are 25 percent higher, and proficiency rates have declined during the past three years for white, black, Hispanic, Asian, free-lunch and limited-English proficiency students.
- Employers want to hire graduates, especially minorities, but can't find those academically proficient enough to even fill out a job application or read a simple safety manual?

He must not know that if money solved our education problems, Louisville, which spends 19 percent more per pupil than any of the other 173 districts, would be the education poster district.

On the same page in the same publication on the same day, two political leaders claim to successfully represent the same commonwealth but take very different positions on how that works. One warns that Congress is spending our children's inheritance while the other brags about it.

But that dichotomy simply represents a microcosm of the country.

A growing number of Kentuckians want less spending and a more constitutional government.

Others prefer the Sugar Daddy approach, which keeps more and more dependents sucking on government's teat, all the while vigorously shaking their heads in approval at policies that redistribute the wealth and institute a state of Nanny-ism that runs every aspect of their lives.

I offer the government-enabled folks a question originally raised by Bertrand Russell: "If one man offers you democracy and another offers you a bag of grain, at what stage of starvation will you prefer the grain to a vote?"

Undoing the failure of past irresponsible spending decisions in Washington will feel like starving to the entitlement-addicted crowd. But selling our nation's soul for a bowl of socialism would be fatal for freedom.

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