

DEFICIT WAR: Save Big Bird for later

Written by Editorial Staff
Friday, 28 January 2011 15:00

What is ailing America today? Is it health care? The national debt? The economy? Big Bird? According to some Republicans, it's all four.

ObamaCare is a convoluted mess that needs major work. Republicans are on the right track in hoping to force a re-write of the new law. Our national debt is at ridiculously high levels. It certainly is far past time to start taking a serious look at attacking that debt. America's economy is still on a roller-coaster and most likely will be for some time. While strides have been made, voters aren't confident, which is what led to a Republican ambush in November. All three of these issues are worthy of GOP attention.

With so much to do, why is it that a conservative House committee once again has tried to put Big Bird's head on the chopping block?

On Thursday, the Republican Study Committee exhumed ancient attacks on public broadcasting, the national endowments for the arts and humanities, family planning, the AmeriCorps youth-service program and several other liberal programs - all under the cover of attacking the budget deficit.

It is true that there are savings to be had. The government spends some \$450 million each year in funding the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the parent company of PBS. And when your deficit is in the trillion's, every \$100 million will help.

But this move by the GOP seems more like axe-grinding than true deficit work. Republicans have been trying to do away with PBS and National Public Radio for years. Why not try again with a "mandate from the people" to cut spending?

The problem is there are bigger issues to attack. Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid are far more important to deficit reduction than public broadcasting. So is defense spending. ObamaCare is a far bigger challenge for lawmakers. Our continued economic recovery may be the biggest of all.

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Big Bird and Oscar may end up casualties of an economic war that must be fought if this country is to right its economic ship. But lawmakers should tackle the big issues first. PBS will still be there to debate after more important programs are addressed.