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1985-1997

November 20, 2010

Dear Freshman Member of Congress:

Obviously, congratulations are in order on your recent winning election. Enjoy the moment, as the heavy lifting is about to begin.

You are faced with two terrific challenges;

1. Don't let Washington change you.
2. Meet the high expectations of the people that elected you.

Facing you, ready and willing to take you to the woodshed is a bloated, overgrown, entrenched government bureaucracy, protected by unions and millions of lines of Federal Code regarding hiring, firing, discipline, whistle blowing and on and on.

Reinforced with an attitude of, "Hey, brother/sister I was here when you got here and I will still be here a long time after you are gone," this group of several million people will do all they can to defeat any meaningful proposal you put forth, especially if it requires them to produce more or change the way they work.

You also have your detractors in the Congress, including, many in your own political party.

This is no picnic you have invited yourself to attend. However, it is a place where one person can make a difference and you can do great good for the future of your country.

Don't let Washington change you!

That process began the moment you were announced as the winner of your election. It can be a heady experience, not unlike a too young person that reaches stardom through a sudden hit song, but then does not have the maturity to handle all that is offered them.

Remind yourself every hour or two who you really are. Keep in close contact with friends and acquaintances back home. Find someone that will "ground you" if your head starts to swell and you begin believing your own press releases.

In Congress you will have many "friends" but very few "true friends".

Get back to your district every weekend. Yes, every weekend and holiday. Do not lose touch with the folks that elected you. Know their challenges and desires.

Do not start giving "political answers". Think straight, talk straight and do not try to make everyone happy. That's what has gotten this country into the current situation.

Some people have to be told "no". You will be surprised at how many people that are told "no" will figure out a better solution to their imagined problems.

Place this quote somewhere that you will see and read everyday.

"You cannot help the poor by destroying the rich.
You cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong.
You cannot bring about prosperity by discouraging thrift.
You cannot lift the wage earner up by pulling the wage payer down.
You cannot further the brotherhood of man by inciting class hatred.
You cannot build character and courage by taking away men's initiative and independence.
You cannot help men permanently by doing for them, what they could and should do for themselves."

-Abraham Lincoln

Meet the high expectations of the people that elected you.

Seek out others that share your views and then join with them to become a block of votes and voices leadership cannot ignore.

If you will stay true to your cause, roots, and beliefs the task of living up to expectations will be easier. However, this is going to be a monumental undertaking, as much is expected of you in terms of turning this country back on course, and quickly.

As a freshman, you have no political clout built up over years of service. You will not be chairman of any influential committees. There will be those that the media will identify as "rising stars". The stars are still freshmen. Ignore them and continue with your task.

You do, however, have great strength in numbers. The majority of the American people are behind you. You will find many existing Members that do share your vision on what government should be. Enlist them in your fight and use their seniority to your advantage.

Do not get stretched too thin! Pick no more than three things to concentrate upon and then put all your energy into that mission.

Policy is fun and it has long term benefits, however it is difficult to change, takes more time than you have available to you and the general public is always slow to pick up on the implications. Save policy for your next term.

The only one tried and true weapon you have in your arsenal that will immediately get the attention of bureaucrats and the public is **money**.

Cut the money and you will see immediate results.

Do not be surprised when a suggested cut is characterized as you wanting to starve children, leave the elderly in the cold or cut off education to the under-privileged. That is the political rhetoric comprising the backbone of the liberal left every time a suggestion to reel in the size of the bureaucracy is mentioned.

Follow up with intense scrutiny of the effected agency, point out how much more money would be available for program benefits and you will be able to achieve results beyond your wildest dreams.

Don't re-invent the wheel. Go back to 1995 and see what happened when the IRS budget was cut 10% and a \$1 billion per year waste of money was eliminated.

Lack of oversight on government agencies has been a huge contributor to excessive and wasteful spending. Oversight is your job. That's what we hired you to do.

We don't want you to be dreaming up new and wonderful programs we can't live without. We want you to get the bureaucracy's attention by taking away a portion of their funding and then doing an exhaustive audit and investigation into their operating practices.

Ask some of the old appropriators how to just "fence" off money for various programs and force the agencies to give you a precise plan on how the money will be spent and then do not release the money until your demands are met.

The Constitution declares that only the Congress has the power to spend money. Use that power wisely. If that is a difficult concept to understand, then try this one on for size.

As a taxpayer I am a stockholder in your bank (Congress). Your bank has the responsibility to protect my investment (i.e. taxes paid). Your bank is the only one that, by law, can disburse my "investment" to the various agencies that provide the services my investment demands (roads,

military, law enforcement, airports, FDA and etc.) Therefore, it is your responsibility to see that my investment is spent wisely and without undo waste, fraud and abuse.

Under this scenario, you should be tougher than any commercial bank in this country making a personal, business or home loan, as your “borrowers” are not going to pay you back. Additionally, you should not be passing money out to them based on a short, choreographed “hearing” as is now the practice.

Instead, each agency should be scrutinized at the highest degree possible. All aspects of the agencies operations should be put under the microscope and examined for best practices, efficiency, waste and existing as well as potentials for abuse. Then, and only then, should you extend them a check.

Just because an agency head is sitting across from you in a hearing room do not assume he/she is always telling the truth. As Ronald Reagan once said, “trust, but verify”.

In practical terms, to do this government wide in one stroke borders on the impossible. However, government agencies all suffer from the “Blackbird Syndrome”. That’s where several hundred Blackbirds are sitting on a telephone wire and then suddenly one of them takes off. No one knows where that one bird is headed but the entire flock takes off behind him.

Agencies work the same way. They watch each other like a Hawk (Blackbird).

Pick one or two agencies for the “Mr. Clean” treatment. Go after them in high profile. You will be surprised how many other agencies will start to clean up their acts.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) would be a good place to start. It is one of the smaller agencies, therefore completing the audits and investigations will take less time. It is an agency that has drifted for nearly six years without a permanent Director.

ATF was recently featured on CNN regarding an agent who blew the whistle on an illegal wiretap and was rewarded with exile to an office with nothing to do for two years.

One of their Special Agents in Charge (SAC) was found by a local reporter to be driving a brand new Cadillac with all the bells and whistles plus a police package. His punishment was to move him to DC Headquarters with a promotion.

Check the millions of dollars paid out in settlements to employees as well as the huge backlog of employee complaints being ignored. Compare this to other larger agencies and you will be shocked at the level of abuse and waste.

Along with the smaller agency you should consider one of the “sacred cows”. Medicaid comes to mind as it is so filled with waste, duplication, fraud and inefficiency the savings alone will be in the billions if not trillions of dollars.

Bottom line, it is your responsibility and obligation to make these agencies accountable to you and, by extension through you, to me the taxpayer.

Demanding accountability is where you can make the biggest difference in the shortest amount of time.

It hasn't been done for years. Focus and cut, change Washington not the other way around.

Respectfully,

QuickTime™ and a
TFF (Uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

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