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## Minority party syndrome

By Richard W. Rahn

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"There are two political parties in America, the stupid party and the evil party," goes the old adage. This is about the stupid party -- the Republican Party.

The majority of Americans consistently tell pollsters they prefer lower taxes and less government spending. More Republicans than Democrats consistently say they believe in smaller government and lower taxes. Given these statements of belief, the Republican Party should be the permanent majority party, but it is not.

Republicans pride themselves on being better stewards of the public purse and providing more honest government than their Democrat competitors. In general, this is true, but Republicans have a tendency to commit political suicide, like lemmings jumping off a cliff, by taxing and spending like Democrats once they obtain majority status.

The result of rapid increases in taxing and spending is always the same. Businesses find themselves less competitive because of the growing tax burden, so they hire fewer workers and some businesses just pick up and move to greener pastures. This, in turn, causes the higher tax economy to slow relative to lower tax jurisdictions. Eventually, the citizens get fed up with the high taxes and reduced economic opportunity and throw out the ruling party. This cycle gets repeated time and time again, and the Republicans never seem to learn.

My own state of Virginia is the current poster child for suicidal Republicans. The Democrat Gov. Mark Warner sounded like a conservative Republican when he ran for office and pledged not to raise taxes. Predictably, he has now proposed a big tax increase. Being a Democrat, his political base does not hold it against him, because the Democrats are the party of big government. Remember, Bill Clinton promised to cut taxes when he first ran for president, but then turned around and raised them -- but, again, this is not a sin for a Democrat.

When Mr. Warner proposed the tax increase, the politically smart and economically responsible thing for the Republican majority in the state legislature would have been to oppose it. Instead, the Republican Senate leadership came up with an even bigger tax increase proposal, once again proving they are members of the stupid party.

Note, the Virginia economy has boomed for the last several decades, primarily because it was responsibly governed until the last few years. Virginia state spending has gone up almost 50 percent since 1998, far outstripping the growth in population and inflation.

Rather than be responsible and keep the growth in government programs at a rate no greater than citizens' incomes, many Republican members of the legislature offer lame excuses for going back on their promises to the voters.

Republicans tend to be less tolerant about being lied to by their elected representatives -- hence, we can expect to see numerous "former" Republican state politicians over the next couple of years.

At the national level, many Republican officials also have "Economic History Attention Deficit Disorder," aka "EHADD." Herbert Hoover raised taxes, tariffs and spending, which turned a normal recession with help from the Federal Reserve into the Great Depression, and it took the Republicans more than a generation to make a comeback after that fiasco.

Richard Nixon thought it was smart to tax and spend like Lyndon Johnson, so his economic policies and Watergate resulted in us all having to suffer through the Jimmy Carter years.

Ronald Reagan is greatly respected because he didn't sell out his party or nation, and did manage to reduce the growth in the nondefense side of government spending and relieved us of punitive high tax rates.

The first George Bush came down with a case of EHADD after he was elected. Forgetting the lessons Mr. Reagan had taught, The former President Bush increased taxes after pledging not to -- which resulted in enough Republicans sitting out the next election to cause him to be unemployed.

Our current president clearly understands Republicans need to cut rather than increase taxes. But it is troubling that this administration appears not to comprehend that growth in government spending destroys more private sector jobs than can be created in the government sector and that limiting government means limiting spending growth.

It is even more depressing to listen to some Republican members of Congress, EHADD sufferers all, say they might not vote to make the recently enacted tax cuts permanent or, even worse, vote to increase taxes.

The reason Republicans are viewed as the stupid party, throwing away what should be their majority status, is that they have allowed those who suffer from EHADD to hold office and vote. Political leaders who are infected with EHADD are true weapons of mass destruction, and hence must be eliminated.

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