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## Hypocrites

By Richard W. Rahn

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*Hypocrite* (noun) — one who pretends to be what he is not or have principles or beliefs that he does not have.

Former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan has just come out with the predictable book by a former government official, where he claims others made the mistakes. He now skewers the Bush administration and Congress for their irresponsible and excessive spending. However, while many of us were fighting the battle, he was silent when his words might have caused the Washington body politic to act a bit more responsibly. One can only conclude Mr. Greenspan put a higher value on his own reappointment and good press from the liberal media than on the fiscal health of the nation he had pledged to serve.

Almost all U.S. politicians, Republicans and Democrats alike, will tell you they are against socialism, but their actions are often those of socialists. Back in 1968, the federal government began offering taxpayer-subsidized flood insurance for homeowners living in high-risk areas. This, of course, had the predictable result of encouraging more people to build less-storm-resistant structures in flood-prone areas than if they had not been able to get subsidized insurance.

Rather than learn from this costly foolishness, the state of Florida, under Republican Gov. Charles Crist, has now created a state-owned (socialized) insurance company to "protect" its citizens from the high cost of insurance that results from living in hurricane-prone areas. Rather than protect its citizens, Florida has put all of them at risk, by creating an insurance company with a \$434 billion exposure but only \$2 billion of reserves. If Florida has another couple of bad hurricane years, as in 2004 and 2005, the state's taxpayers will take a huge financial hit, and wish they had chosen to live in a state whose politicians don't act like socialists.

Democrats, in particular, will tell you how much they care about children, the elderly, the physically disabled and the poor. Yet, they continue to push for locking up enormous amounts of American land in so-called wilderness areas. The latest push among congressional Democrats is to add another 109 million acres to the hundreds of millions of acres that can only be accessed by the most physically fit.

These wilderness areas are off-limits to almost any sort of motor vehicle, so if you are not able to hike long distances or climb over rugged landscapes with heavy survival gear, tough luck. These same Democrats are most willing to fine a small storekeeper for having an aisle 2 inches too narrow for some wheelchairs, but seem to have no reluctance to prohibit more than 100 million Americans from enjoying scenery of which they are part owners. In addition, by locking up so much land, Americans are not allowed to obtain the fuel, timber and mineral reserves in these areas. This, in turn, creates an artificial scarcity, driving up prices for these resources and disproportionately hurting the poor.

Most members of Congress proclaim they care about the world's poor and low-income Americans. For at least 200 years, it has been known that free trade does more to reduce poverty than almost any other action a government could take. But the new Democratic congressional leadership is now holding up several trade agreements which would create new jobs for some of the world's poorest people, and lower prices for American consumers — again, most beneficial for low-income people.

The nation of Colombia has stopped growing poppy, destroyed many of the drug cartels and cleaned up its government, all at the urging of the United States, which promised a trade agreement in exchange. Instead of rewarding good behavior, the Democrats in Congress are set to reject the agreement. You can be assured that many of these Democrats who vote "no" will then turn around and blame the Bush administration for America being disliked abroad.

Thinking of Columbia — the university this time — its president, Lee Bollinger, claimed he invited Iran's despicable President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to speak because the university celebrates free speech. But this free speech does not apply to the U.S. military, which would like to have an ROTC program at Columbia (as would many of us alumni) and the ability to recruit on campus.

Those Democratic presidential candidates and members of Congress who want to raise income taxes on the rich like to pretend that people do not adjust their behavior when taxes are increased. Yet, when you look at the tax returns of many of their party's richest leaders and icons (Sens. John Kerry and Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts, financier Warren Buffet, etc.), you see they have gone to great lengths to avoid paying the high tax rates that are now part of the law.

They also ignore the fact that the top 1 percent of taxpayers already pays 37 percent of all income taxes (vastly more than its share of income) and the bottom 50 percent of the earners only pay 3.3 percent of the taxes. A recent study by the Office of Management and Budget shows taxpayers are not receiving their expected value from more than 50 percent of federal government programs. Is it not hypocritical to demand more taxes before cleaning up wasteful spending?

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