



## New Year's Resolutions for Others

by Richard W. Rahn

A TWEAK HERE, A TWEAK THERE, STARTING WITH THE TRUTH

New Year's resolutions are difficult to keep. That is why I find it easier to make them for others, rather than myself, as part of my other-people improvement program. The country would not be on the road to ruin if those in government would follow the New Year's resolutions I propose for them, starting with President Obama (as part of my fantasy world).

As is well known, the president has difficulty telling the truth, which, as most children learn at an early age, can lead to many troubles. If the president had always spoken "the whole truth and nothing but the truth," he would have been unable to engage in the destructive economic, foreign and health care policies that have caused him and the nation so many problems. Just think about the mess we would have avoided if the president had said three years ago, "When Congress votes for my proposed Obamacare, you are likely to lose your doctor, the current

insurance plan that you like, and, by the way, it will cost young, healthy people many times as much as they are now paying."

Because it is difficult for many people such as the president to always tell the truth, he should be given a support group in the form of a review committee of distinguished, senior, nonpartisan, well-known truth tellers to approve every written statement and speech that the president makes. Without their signoff, he would not be allowed to say anything — or have anything come out in written form under his name. (This would have the side benefit of causing the president to say far less.)

Members of Congress should resolve to not vote for anything they have not fully read and understood. Again, many of those in Congress may have a problem adhering to this resolution without external discipline. Therefore, before each vote, every member of Congress should have to swear on a Bible, or on the Constitution, on YouTube that they fully understand what they are voting on. One would have thought the embarrassment of having voted for Obamacare without having a clue of what was in it would be sufficient to alter the behavior of members of the House and Senate — but too many continue to stick with the bad old ways that make them look silly and irresponsible — but perhaps that is the problem.

Employees of the IRS should resolve "to do unto others as you would have them do unto you." To enforce this resolution, the name, photo and job description of every IRS employee should be posted online, along with a report card to be filled out by any taxpayer who has an interaction with them. The report card should cover such things as knowledge of the tax code, helpfulness, civility, reasonableness, etc. The bottom 10 percent of the IRS employees should have their pay cut each year. Such a system is only fair, given that the IRS agents know everything about the taxpayers and can fine them for inadequate performance — so what is good for the goose should be good for the gander. Try to imagine a friendly IRS person who fully understands the tax code, instead of those smug, arrogant and ill-informed people who

testified before the House committee this past year. Yes, I know it is a fantasy.

Judges should resolve to follow what is actually written in the Constitution, not how they would like it to be written, or how convenient it is for government to ignore. For instance, the words of the Fifth Amendment are very clear in their meaning: "No person shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself." Yet again, just last week, a federal court ruled against a person who declined to turn over his papers to the IRS on the basis of possible self-incrimination. If judges had been true to the Constitution, much of what the federal government does, it would not be doing, and the country would not be facing financial destruction and a loss of liberty.

The irony is that the president, Congress, the IRS and the judiciary are undermining the people's respect for them and sowing the seeds of their own destruction by not following these simple resolutions.

Finally, voters should resolve to restrain themselves from voting for politicians who promise them goodies to be paid for by the tooth fairy or someone else. It is normal for small children to seek immediate gratification, but adults of voting age are supposed to be able to think about the long-term consequences of their actions. The operative phrase "to be able to think about long-term consequences" has been demonstrated not to be true for most people over long periods of time — and that is why all democracies have ultimately failed.

Oh well, Happy New Year, anyway.

*Richard W. Rahn is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute and chairman of the Institute for Global Economic Growth.*

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/dec/30/rahn-new-years-resolutions-for-others/>

Copyright © 2013 The Washington Times LLC. All rights reserved.