

First, let me get my politics on the table. I'm an independent. I try to look at every issue with an open mind. I don't have a favorite politician. I don't donate money to politicians. I think any cause is better than getting a politician re-elected. I try to stay above politics and look only at the issues.

And there are plenty of issues.

As a country we face huge budget deficits. We face a declining currency. We have service people dying. We face responsibilities to help those suffering from the ongoing consequences and devastation from the Tsunamis. Then of course there are our obligations to our own citizens.

Responsibility. As a country we have taken on the responsibility of helping our own, and others around the world. That's not a bad role. It's a good role. They are among the many reasons I am proud to be an American.

What concerns me is that our politicians don't understand that with accepting responsibility for providing financial support for ourselves and others comes the responsibility to pay the bills. As someone who has had more than one credit card confiscated and scissored, I understand that it's a lot more fun to look like a big shot charging up debt to pay for good deeds, then it is to write the check when the bills are due.

I am all for helping in every single opportunity where it is required. I just want to know that our politicians understand that it has to be paid for, and know how we are going to pay for it.

It would make perfect sense if we, as Americans, would contact our politicians and let them know how we want to pay for obligations. How nice would it be for a community to stand up and say... We don't need the 100k for a Punxsutawney Phil Museum. We don't need 25k for the study of Mariachi Music. We don't need 3mm dollars to help fisherman sell seafood in Alaska. Or any of thousands of other low on the priority list items that have been funded with taxpayer dollars. Instead, let's use that money to help the Tsunami victims. Or put that in a fund for the next disaster that is sure to occur.

Of course that's not going to happen. It's the culture that we have. We are giving it out, so get yours while you can. Let everyone else figure out how it's going to be paid for.

It's a tradition that can only be changed from the top.

It's up to President Bush to set an example.

How about it Mr. President? Can you take the first step? I can help you figure out where to start.

Start by cancelling your inauguration parties and festivities.

Could there be anything more confusing and shocking than to read that our country was offering \$35mm in aid to the areas affected by the Tsunamis, but that the cost of inauguration parties would be about \$40mm?

Does anyone else think that this is wrong?

I realize that the cost for the inauguration is being picked up by corporate sponsors and people purchasing outrageously priced tickets. The question is why.

Why are all these corporations and people spending all that money? Hey I love a good party, but there ain't no party like a \$10,000 per ticket party. It's a 10k dollar ass kissing. As an accountant, fund raiser when asked about the high prices to attend the Inaugural events told the NYTimes, "It's the cost of playing the game".

Mr President, it's time to change the game.

In your re-election campaign, you talked a lot about leadership. Your ability to lead in times like these. Your ability to set an example. Mr President, it's time to show that leadership. It's time to set an example.

Cancel all but the most basic inauguration requirements.

It should be the easiest decision of your 2nd term.

You, Laura and the girls can still have family over and appreciate your blessings. I'm sure people who want to get out and have a good time, will still find a way to have fun. But that 40mm dollars can go a long way. Instead of shaking hands all night and being driven from party to party, send them a thank you card letting them know that the corporate and individual donations that had been earmarked for fun, was now going to help more people than they could ever imagine. Without the hangovers.

The impact of cancelling the frills would be staggering. You would immediately send the message that you as President and we as a country, really do know how to prioritize. That we will start accepting financial responsibility.

It would be hard for other politicians to not follow your lead. You could ask them to do the right thing and give up something they can do without, so that there are dollars available for those who really need them.

Leadership starts at the top. Culture change can start with some things that really are easy to do.

And 40mm dollars going to help those really in need can have a huge impact.

Do the right thing. Send the right message. Lead by example Mr President.