

OCPA FaxLine Report

a public policy information service for members of the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, Inc.

Dear OCPA Member:

Thursday, November 20, 2008

The *Tulsa World* reported that “U. S. Senator Jim Inhofe said Saturday that Congress was not told the truth about the bailout of the nation’s financial system.” This was in response to the news that Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson had announced he was going to abandon “his plan to free up the nation’s credit system by buying up toxic assets from troubled financial institutions.” Instead the newspaper notes “Paulson wants to take a more direct action on the consumer credit front.”

Inhofe’s response was immediate, blunt and to the point. Oklahoma’s senior Senator says he wants Congress to take back what is left of the \$700 billion blank check. “It is just outrageous that the American people don’t know that Congress doesn’t know how much money he has given away to anyone.” The problem according to Inhofe has to do with a lack of transparency in the whole process. “Congress,” he notes, “abdicated its constitutional responsibility by signing a truly blank check over to the Treasury Secretary.”

Inhofe’s proposal is admittedly a long shot, but it’s worth mentioning. Apparently, rather than helping solve a problem, the bailout vote has merely exacerbated it. Now everyone (including General Motors, Ford and Chrysler) seems to be standing in line with their hands out. Why not? If handing out money becomes a new service provided by government, then there is no reason (some figure) that taxpayers shouldn’t pick up the costs on necessities for everyone such as health care, groceries, housing and as one woman enthusiastically suggested recently on national television, *gas for her car!*

Back in the 1990’s, reform of welfare was finally implemented after years and years of governmental dependency that had destroyed the incentive of self-initiative in many segments of our society. “The Great Society” was replaced by “The Great Sobriety” as true reform to the welfare system arrived and people finally came to their senses and realized that their futures no longer depended on government handouts but on themselves. Now we seem to be taking a step or two (or three) backwards into the pages of a bleak chapter of American history.

There are two quotes to keep in mind. The first is from President Gerald R. Ford who noted, “A government big enough to supply you with everything you need, is a government big enough to take away everything that you have.” When I hear this group and that group justify their reasons for getting a helping hand (or what is now referred to as a *bailout*) a sudden chill runs down my spine. Suddenly no one feels responsible for themselves anymore as government willingly rushes in to fix everything. If the intentions of our government were truly altruistic it wouldn’t lure its citizens into dependency in the first place. The second quotation is from Benjamin Franklin who said, “When the people find they can vote themselves money, that will herald the end of the republic.” I hope that’s not a precursor of things to come.

Trust in our elected officials is needed now more than ever in every level of government. If there is a problem providing financial transparency, trust is lost and the policy becomes suspect. Senator Inhofe, I hope America will return to her senses sooner rather than later . . .

Until next time . . . Brett A. Magbee, Vice President for Operations

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