



Insight

Democrats: MIA

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What is it with Democrats and facing up to the nation's budget woes? As vividly described in the *Washington Post*, the federal government, state governments, and municipal governments face a sea of red ink. The president's Fiscal Reform Commission called this a national "moment of truth" that would require facing up to hard choices and ending the tradition of dodging decisions and playing political games with the budget.

Right.

In Wisconsin, Democrats have chosen Illinois water parks over the job in the state legislature of addressing the fourth-largest pension gap per resident in the nation, and the additional red ink from health benefits. Over in Indiana, they are simply AWOL. At least in Ohio they appear to be merely protesting the tough work they face.

But the states are little fish in the big pond of budget irresponsibility. As the federal government churns inexorably towards the expiration of its stopgap financing on March 4, the Republican-led House stepped up and passed a continuing resolution in timely fashion this past Saturday. Did Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid call the Senate back, push through a Senate CR, and begin the crucial task of mediating policy differences from the House in conference?

No. He gave a stirring speech on brothels and prepared to take up patent reform upon the Senate's return. Patents? (NBAers, imagine saying it like Allen Iverson used to pronounce practice.)

Last but not least, President Obama continues to be the Incredible-Disappearing-Leader-on-Entitlements (IDLE). He has produced a budget empty of any real effort to address the nation's greatest threat to its prosperity and freedom, has apparently reined in Senate Democrats willing to discuss Social Security reform, and on the 2011 budget has restricted himself to exactly the "just say no" approach he has consistently tried to pin on Republicans.

It is a wearying political moment. On a bipartisan basis, the consensus has emerged that this is the moment to take on the government's spending problem. The evidence is growing that reductions in government payrolls and transfer payments can be combined with restraint on taxes to generate growth, jobs, and a future for the next generations free of the burden of debt. But Americans need both parties to be serious.

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