

GOP warns Obama against tax increases, spending (Update)

February 12 2013, by Ken Thomas



In this Feb. 7, 2013 photo, Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., speaks with The Associated Press in his Capitol Hill office in Washington. In the nearly 100 days since President Barack Obama won a second term, the Florida senator has taken calculated, concrete steps to emerge as a next generation leader of a rudderless party and put a 21st Century stamp on the conservative movement. (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)

(AP)—Republicans say President Barack Obama's second-term agenda

will bring more tax increases and increase deficit spending. They're vowing to promote economic growth to help middle-class families find good jobs.

Republicans are responding to Obama's State of the Union address with fresh appeals to voters on the economy and promises to rein in federal spending with a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution.

Florida Sen. Marco Rubio says in the Republican address that Obama should "abandon his obsession with raising taxes."

Ohio Sen. Rob Portman says Obama is promoting "the same big-government policies that have failed to get our economy up and running again."

Republicans warned Tuesday that President Barack Obama's second-term agenda would bring more tax increases and escalate deficit spending, casting the president's policies as impediments to middle-class families he championed during his re-election campaign.

Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, in excerpts released ahead of his Republican response to Obama's State of the Union address, said he hoped that the president would "abandon his obsession with raising taxes" and pursue policies that would foster economic growth and help middle-class families achieve prosperity.

"Presidents in both parties—from John F. Kennedy to Ronald Reagan—have known that our free-enterprise economy is the source of our middle-class prosperity. But President Obama? He believes it's the cause of our problems," Rubio said.

Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul, in excerpts from a separate tea party response, cast blame on both parties, saying "Washington acts in a way

that your family never could—they spend money they do not have, they borrow from future generations, and then they blame each other for never fixing the problem."

The two speeches will help frame how Republicans respond to Obama's first State of the Union address of his second term and try to shape the agenda at a time of divided government. Obama's first term was marked by clashes with Republicans in Congress over the role of government, deficits and spending cuts, and both sides were using their addresses to offer prescriptions for rejuvenating the economy.

Rubio, a rising star in the Republican party and a potential 2016 presidential contender, pointed to his Miami roots to address Obama's frequent portrayal of Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney—and his party—as only caring about the wealthiest Americans. Rubio said he still lived in the "same working-class neighborhood I grew up in" and his neighbors "aren't millionaires" but retirees, workers and immigrants.

"The tax increases and the deficit spending you propose will hurt middle-class families. It will cost them their raises. It will cost them their benefits. It may even cost some of them their jobs. And it will hurt seniors because it does nothing to save Medicare and Social Security," Rubio said.

"So Mr. President, I don't oppose your plans because I want to protect the rich. I oppose your plans because I want to protect my neighbors," he said.

Rubio said the nation needed a balanced budget amendment to curb spending and said he would not support changes to Medicare that would hurt seniors like his mother. But he said anyone in favor of keeping a status quo on Medicare "is in favor of bankrupting it."

Rubio was delivering his rebuttal from the Speaker's conference room in the U.S. Capitol after Obama's address. He was pre-recording the same speech in Spanish for Spanish-language networks, a nod to Republicans who have said that they must address their deficit with Hispanic voters in order to compete effectively with Democrats in the future. Obama won 71 percent of Hispanics last year against Romney.

Turning to immigration reform, a top policy debate of the year, Paul urged members of his party to see immigrants "as assets, not liabilities." He said the party had a history of embracing "hard work and ingenuity" and that meant Republicans must embrace "the immigrant who wants to come to America for a better future."

"We must be the party that says, 'If you want to work, if you want to become an American, we welcome you,'" Paul said.

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Citation: GOP warns Obama against tax increases, spending (Update) (2013, February 12) retrieved 8 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-02-obama-focus-economy-guns-immigration.html>

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