

America's Economy On Rebound

By DONALD LAMBRO

Washington Enterprise Association

WASHINGTON — We interrupt your usually depressing news to bring you some developments that will give Americans cause to be optimistic about our economy.



LAMBRO

I know this runs against the grain of the fear-mongering we have been hearing from Wall Street and the whiners and complainers in Washington, but several things happened last week that suggest this country is definitely moving in the right direction.

The government reports that tax revenues are significantly higher than anticipated, cutting the budget deficit much more deeply than was forecast.

Unemployment has fallen to a low 4.6 percent after 34 consecutive months of continued job growth. The economy was growing at a blistering 5.6 percent rate in the first quarter, and the U.S. Treasury reports that total worker compensation (including wages and benefits) grew by 7.4 percent after inflation during the current expansion.

Not surprisingly, the Gallup Poll also reported last week that President Bush's job approval rating, which has been in the low 30s for months, has risen to 40 percent. That's still way below his peak of previous years, but a sign that he is turning his presidency around in his second term.

Let's take some of these developments one at a time because they fully deserve more attention than they have been getting in the national news media.

The budget deficit: It's big, wasteful and mostly unnecessary, but it's a product

of many things, including unanticipated events like Katrina, economic downturns and the huge defense costs in the war on terror. Much of it is also due to excessive discretionary spending and runaway entitlements.

One way to shrink the deficit is to boost economic growth by cutting the tax rates on work, investment and savings — and that's what is happening in the economy right now, despite predictions to the contrary by naysayers who said the tax cuts would worsen the deficit.

The Office of Management and Budget reported last week that the fiscal 2006 deficit will be 30 percent lower than expected. The new estimate — \$296 billion or 2.3 percent of the nation's gross domestic product — is on track to fall to \$188 billion in 2008 or 1.3 percent of GDP.

The reason: "Overall tax revenues are growing at the fastest pace in 40 years,"

says Brian Riedl, the Heritage Foundation's budget analyst. In fact, since Bush's tax cuts were fully accelerated in 2003, tax receipts have risen by over 34.6 percent.

These increased revenues are the result of several things going on in the economy since Bush enacted his across-the-board tax rate cuts. More Americans are working and paying taxes, more investors have had capital gains from the sale of assets that have produced much higher cap gains tax revenue (even at the lower 15 percent rate), and more businesses have had higher earnings and thus have paid more in taxes.

Stronger economic growth: We keep hearing that the U.S. economy is slowing down, but too little about how the economy speeded up in first three months of this year.

In a revision of first-quarter growth, the government said the economy was

expanding much faster than they had reported — at 5.6 percent pace, instead of the previous 5.3 percent estimate.

In fact, the economy has been growing over 18 consecutive quarters, averaging 4 percent per year in inflation-adjusted terms. That's far better than the post-World War II yearly average of 3.4 percent.

A brighter jobs picture: The reason you don't hear Democratic leaders talking as much about jobs anymore is because more people are working than ever before. The Labor Department says 5.4 million new jobs have been created since August 2003, producing an unemployment rate (4.6 percent) that is lower than the average rates of the previous four decades.

Critics attacked last month's 121,000 new jobs as anemic, a figure that comes from business payroll surveys. But they (See LAMBRO, Page 11)

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Thought for Today

"For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish." 2 Corinthians 2:15

Jews Go After Arab Militias

Pity the sons of Abraham and Isaac. They were reduced to sacrificial lambs during Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler's World War II Holocaust, and have endured an endless stream of wars and rumors of wars since their exodus from Europe to the Holy Land several generations ago.

As they have been since the early days of the Jewish state, they are now under attack by Hezbollah, Hamas and other extremist Arab militias, all of which are hate-filled organizations dedicated to the overthrow of the Jewish state and the murder of the Jewish people.

As the Jews hammer their enemies in the Gaza strip — land that was previously vacated by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) in 2000 after 15 years of occupation — the forces of appeasement in Europe and the United Nations are calling for a cease-fire. French President Jacques Chirac, a longtime friend of Arab despots, has charged that Israel's leadership has gone too far in its response to the capture of several Israeli soldiers.

Israel has offered to stop its offensive if three conditions are met, namely 1) Hezbollah terrorists must withdraw 30 kilometers northward from Lebanon's border with Israel, 2) Two Israeli soldiers captured by Hezbollah must be released, and 3) Hezbollah must stop firing rockets into Israel.

Those are reasonable terms. But remember we are not dealing with reasonable people. These are people (mostly young Arab men) who have been indoctrinated since birth that the Jewish state is a "blight against Islam," and that the Jews are the "spawn of Satan."

Armed with explosives, missiles and small arms provided by Iran and Syria, Hezbollah and its satellite groups are now waging a war which has wit-

nessed the firing of about 1,500 missiles and rockets into Israel's territory since early last week. How would Floridians react if Castro's Cuba behaved in a similar fashion? Indeed, how would Texans react if Mexicans in Tijuana fired on El Paso? There would be hell to pay, and that's a fact.

Israel is doing what any sane nation would do under such circumstances. They are defending themselves.

There can be no peace as long as the trouble-makers in Syria and Iran continue to whip up hysteria and hatred toward the Jewish state. And Saudi Arabia needs to stop the practice of funding those Madras schools in Pakistan which teach young children to loathe and despise Christians and Jews. Nothing good can come from such unrelenting venom.

Iran has no intention of standing idly by while the United States and Iraq work toward the establishment of a representative democracy in Iraq. They are doing their level best to disrupt this government through a campaign of sectarian strife, murder and kidnapping — all to the tune of the Quran.

No, if there is to be any peace in the Middle East, Iran's dreams of a resurgent Persian Empire must be dashed at every level. And that is beginning with the U.N. Security Council's unanimous vote of condemnation against North Korea's missile tests and Israel's decision to go head-to-head against Iran's proxy soldiers — the Hezbollah and Hamas guerrillas.

Victory against Islamic extremism is the key to winning the war on terror. We urge Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and the IMF to make life as painful as possible for Hezbollah and its supporters in Iran and Syria.

Uncle Joe Angers Democrats

By JONAH GOLDBERG
Tribune Media Services

For several years now, liberal eggheads have been having what seems like an important debate:

Do they need "big ideas" like the conservative movement had during its long march to power? Serious-minded liberals launched what Democratic idea-broker



LIEBERMAN

Kenneth S. Baer calls "the battle of the battle of ideas," in which they argue about whether it's time to argue about important arguments.

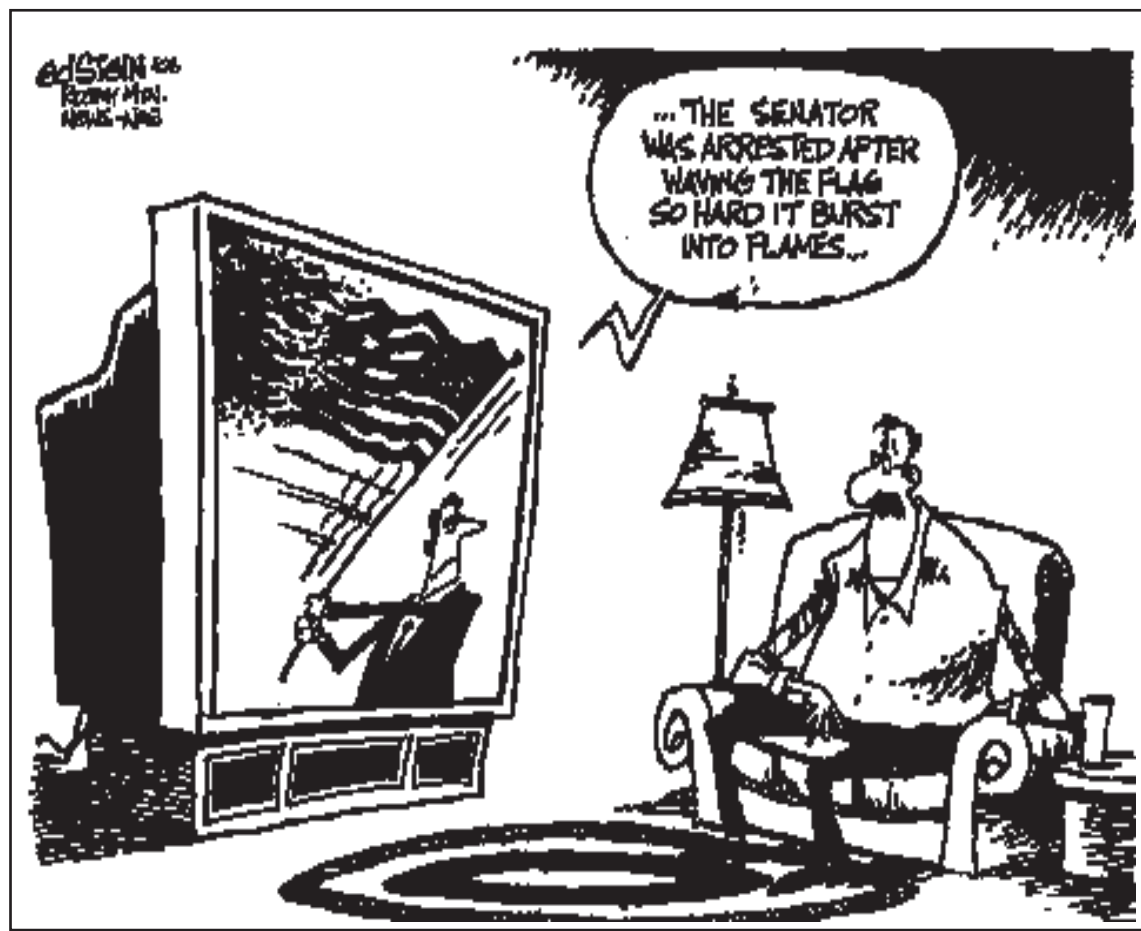
Just recently, Baer and Andrei Cherny — founders of a new big-idea journal, "Democracy" — penned an op-ed in the Los Angeles Times calling for liberals to find new Big Ideas. In response to this effort, the New Republic's Jonathan Chait says — and I'm not making this up — "Ideas? Feh."

posted on the liberal blog TPM Cafe: "The problem isn't getting people to believe in something — people can believe in anything. The problem is getting them to care." That captures the essence of liberalism's current plight. If it's not about emotions — caring, hating, feeling — it's about tactics. Big ideas have about as much animating force in liberal ranks today as Calvinism does at a porn studio.

Exhibit A is the liberal battle over Connecticut Sen. Joe Lieberman's re-election. Lieberman, America's favorite Jewish uncle, is in the fight of his political life because limousine liberal Ned Lamont is challenging him in the Democratic primary. Oceans of ink and pixels have been devoted to explaining the factions behind this "civil war" on the left. Some paint it as the "net-roots," or left-wing bloggers, versus the Washington establishment. Others talk of hawks vs. doves, or populists vs. elitists, the Obama party line vs. independents, cats not making this up — "Ideas? Feh." Alas, Chait has it right: "Feh." For good or ill, there are no

grand "big ideas" behind the anti-Lieberman cause. It's driven by a riot of passions, chiefly against President Bush and "his" war. Any ideas are mere afterthoughts and rationalizations used to gussy up animus as principle. Several Lamont supporters, also known as "Nedheads," have faulted Lieberman for such obscure transgressions as criticizing former President Bill Clinton's behavior in the Monica Lewinsky scandal. Please. There was no lack of enthusiasm for Lieberman when the sainted Al Gore picked Joe as his running mate.

It's also nonsense to say this is about "the people" vs. "the establishment." Lieberman's a three-term junior senator. Ted Kennedy, scion of America's leading liberal dynasty, has been in the Senate 26 years longer. Is he not the establishment? Robert Byrd of West Virginia has been in the Senate since the mid-Jurassic period. That old, calcified chewing gum stuck underneath the establishment's chair? He put it there. But while Kennedy and Byrd (and Gore, Howard Dean, John Kerry (See GOLDBERG, Page 11)



City's Drug Menace Worsens

By BRIAN S. SWEAT
Guest Columnist

There is a monster looming over this town, his grimy fingers poking into all of our lives unawares, sullyng us with his soul-busting depravity. The monster here is not an obvious one, not one of Frankenstein's creations set upon the villagers. No, this monster is a familiar one, so familiar that we, having grown inured to its presence over time, may not even be aware of its power. What is this monster? Read on, and I'll tell you.

To begin, let me explain the predicament I am in. My apartment is one of four in a complex located across from Central Baptist Church, which looks over the apartments like a stern and rather large grandfather. When my family and I moved in, the complex seemed like a quaint and quiet place, and months went by without anything unusual happening. Unfortunately, we slowly started to realize, with dawning aggravation, that something was wrong.

Night and day, we saw an influx of odd strangers driving up, knocking on a neighbor's door, and leaving immediately thereafter. We would see strange teenage boys, their eyes tiny vacuums that no light of intelligence can escape from, either lurking in the front yard or walking in a circumspect manner past one of our windows, strutting that stupidly defiant strut common to most teenage boys.

Our neighbors grew increasingly more unkempt and shirtless, and beer bottles and cans started to adorn every inch of the property like perverse lawn ornaments. Tiny, almost elfin plastic bags started to litter the driveway. Finally, the last straw — after forgetting to lock our doors, our Playstation 2 went missing. (Luckily, my vast collection of books went untouched; such is the benefit of loving fusty old knowledge in a world of shiny new ignorance.) The police were alerted, but I knew the old gaming system was gone, never to return, offered up as barter for the substances that are the subject of this long-winded story: drugs.

I do not intend here to lecture about the physical detriments caused by drug abuse, nor will I berate you with blind moralistic outrage aimed at drug users. I will instead point out a few facts which, unheeded by most, are nevertheless key in understanding the real dangers of illegal drugs.

Buying illegal drugs supports criminals. Of course it does; this is no new point to make. However, I would like to remind those of you that buy illegal drugs of this pertinent fact. For every well-to-do teenager tripping on acid, there is a cold-blooded pusher ready to assimilate our hard-earned goods. For every middle-class dabbler that purchases a dainty bag of marijuana, there are 50 no-

account fools that will do anything either for a hit of some poison or for some workingman's DVD player. For each dime bag a doctor's son blazes through with some friends at a party, there are 100 zombies shuffling about after dark, (no wonder there has been a spate of zombie movies lately) going nowhere both physically and spiritually, inspiring in at least myself a feeling of dread for the future and sadness for the current sorry state of affairs.

And the saddest part is that the decent people can do little to stop it, since the problem will last as long as drugs will be in demand, and they seem to be in demand by many, many people across class, race, and gender lines. I am not arrogant enough to think that my little essay here will change anything, nor am I enough of an optimist to think that humanity will rise up as one and vanquish its demons. No, no human nature has been and will ever be prone to easy answers and sullen indifference. At the most, I may give you pause enough to reflect upon this problem, and maybe next time you feel blue you won't buy a bag or vial of easy answers. After all, we vote with our dollars, and drug pushers thrive on our misspent cash. Just think what would happen if everyone pulled a Nancy Reagan and Just Said No for a couple of weeks. Would our streets empty of zombies? Probably. Would our Playstations be safe? Sure. Will this happen? Nah.

But maybe one of you reading this will think twice next time.

Now for an epilogue. Nothing has changed at my apartment complex. No one seems to be bothered by the goings-on there but me. Appeals to higher powers have proven fruitless, maddeningly so. It would seem that I am in a minority of one. Everyone that I see lately seems to be settled into their world of dust and stupidity and basement-low expectations. The zombies are entrenched, and their numbers are growing. If we don't do something soon, all the meek shall inherit will be beer cans and used needles. Waycross will never progress if it is filled with the shirtless and the jobless. All that is decent here will vanish, and the streets will be filled with zombie after zombie.

I fight every day at my job as an English instructor here at Waycross College to rail against the rising swell of ignorance and indifference, or at least I like to aim for that. But I want more than anything to be a force for good, and goodness cannot flourish in a cesspool of ambivalence. I want to make this town, this country, this world, a better place, and I am positive that at least my colleagues here at the college are on board with me. Now, the only question is . . . are you?

EDITOR'S NOTE: Mr. Sweat is a temporary English instructor at Waycross College.