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## **OPINION**

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# **Presidential Inaugural Overshadowed by Federal Government's Failures**

**By Lieutenant Governor Brad Little**

While working in my office on January 21, my television was tuned to the presidential inaugural events. As an American, I honor the rituals of this occasion, which are a celebration of the finest qualities of American democracy and self-governance. But I find it difficult to be positive when the Washington on my screen is a glaring train wreck.

This failure is most clear in the Senate's and the President's inability to pass a budget in nearly four years, while all Americans and many states continue to make compromises to balance their own budgets. President Obama centered his second inaugural address on the need for collective action, flatly stating that the only way America would fulfill its promise would be to do it "together." Yet his administration is today's greatest example of hostility and political games.

During his speech, the President offered his antiquated liberal vision for America. His administration wants to continue to grow government, even now when it is absolutely necessary to reduce long term deficits and begin balancing America's books. This President vaguely speaks of entitlement reform, but never does he define what these tough decisions would entail. Nor has he promoted a plan that would reduce the burden on the American taxpayer and guarantee the solvency of these programs.

The President's speech was deaf to the times in which we live. President Obama sees an American future with a more bloated federal government in which coercion, in the form of more taxation and regulation, takes the place of economic freedom. The role of government is not to divvy up who gets what. An effective government focuses on economic opportunity and making our country more competitive within a global economy. The President fails to realize the necessity of creating an environment that increases productivity and harnesses the most wonderful qualities of the American people— our fierce drive to create prosperity and our ability to self-govern.

Although President Obama does not seem to get the problems facing the country, Idaho's congressional delegation does. Last week, Congressman Mike Simpson co-sponsored a balanced budget amendment to the U.S. Constitution. This provision already exists in the Idaho Constitution and has served this state well since 1890. Why is it so difficult to get Washington's support for this common sense initiative?

While suffering in direct proportion to every other American, Idaho has done the responsible things needed for the times. We have balanced the budget every year during the downturn and slow recovery, we have continued to promote a tax climate attractive to businesses and commerce, and, above all, we have kept bad times from deluding us into thinking a society must accept an ever-increasing amount of government in our lives.

This President has won his second term with the least amount of land mass in American history. But President Obama is not just the president of New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. His administration must recognize America's immense regional differences and concerns, and govern in a way that recognizes the true challenges that face America.

I am eternally hopeful that common sense will prevail, and Congress and the President will opt for a more responsible path. In the meantime, Idaho will continue to show fiscal responsibility and stand up for the most important value of our republic: individual liberty.

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