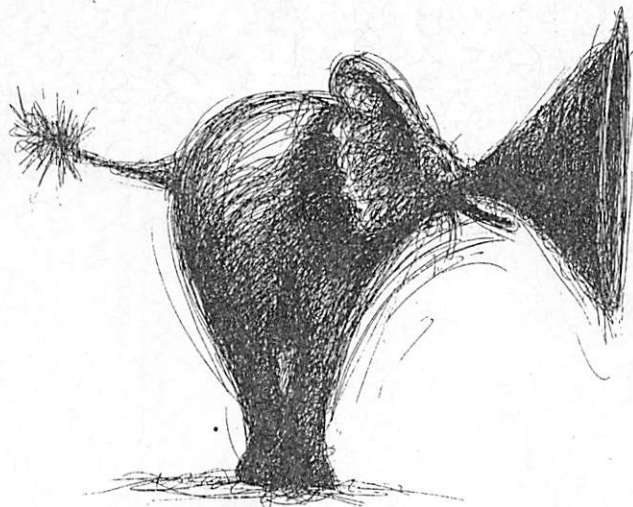


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Artwork by Nancy Ohanian/Los Angeles Times Syndicate

## Where's the GOP counterattack?

**T**he relentless pounding the Republicans are taking from the Democrats and the network news media on their "Contract With America" agenda is only going to get worse.

That's why House and Senate Republican leaders had better come up with a stronger and more skillful offensive strategy or else the Democrats are going to begin winning in the arena of public opinion what they couldn't win at the ballot box last November.

The latest polls are already showing some erosion of support on key parts of the GOP's agenda, as the Democrats escalate their class warfare attacks on the GOP's tax-cut package and the national news media continue to raise fears about the impact of future budget cuts.

Here's a list of steps GOP tacticians should take to counter these attacks and keep the public better informed about what their agenda will do to strengthen the economy, create jobs, erase the deficit and shrink the growth of government spending:

(1) Find new and creative ways to keep reminding the American people on a daily basis about how the deficit is getting larger under President Clinton's budget policies, not smaller, as the White House contends.

The independent Congressional Budget Office's March analysis shows the annual deficit rising from \$170 billion to more than \$200 billion next year and to nearly \$300 billion a year over the next four years. This is going to further fatten the national debt, undermine the value of the dollar, boost interest rates and endanger the future economic security of every American.

Set up a deficit clock outside the Capitol to remind lawmakers and the news media how fast the national debt is growing, ballooning by another \$1 trillion to \$5.4 trillion by 1996. Make sure that the deficit and debt numbers are repeated over and over again.

(2) Don't let the big spenders shift the focus from the issue that angers most Americans: wasteful, excessive and non-essential federal spending. Keep up a daily drumbeat of reports, hearings, news conferences, press releases, radio ads, General Accounting Office audits, television programs and other exposes on wasteful spending, and tie it into the GOP's agenda.

Republican committee chairmen should be scheduling nonstop hearings for the rest of this year that expose agencies and programs that do not work, are not needed and that have wasted hundreds of billions of dollars in taxes.

A government that is giving away \$85 billion a year to big businesses is a government in need of radical cutting. The GOP needs to be at the forefront of cutting corporate welfare first.

(3) Don't let the Democrats get away with class warfare attacks on the GOP tax cuts.

Bring middle-class taxpayers to Washington to testify about how hard it is to make ends meet because so much of their income is taken away by the federal income tax, a larger-than-necessary Social Security tax, taxes on savings and dividends, and business taxes that are hidden in the cost of everything we buy.

A National Taxpayers Union study found that the total tax burden on a family with a median income of \$52,895 in 1991 was \$26,689, or an incredible 50.4 percent of earnings.

The GOP needs to pound these points home. Make the growing federal tax-bite on middle-income families the No. 1 issue in the country.

Who benefits from the GOP's family tax cut? Liberal Democrats like to use figures based on how much of the tax cuts go to those with the most money. And it is true that those with the most money would get a larger percentage of a capital gains tax cut because they have more assets to sell. But it doesn't make the asset of someone with a smaller income any less important or valuable to that person and his future well-being.

Actually, in the number of people helped, the \$500 family tax credit would benefit 74 percent of all families earning below \$75,000 a year — hardly the filthy rich.

(4) Don't let the opposition refocus the GOP's message on issues that are not at the heart and soul of the "Contract With America" agenda. Stay on message.

**A** survey of Sunday morning news shows revealed that the network reporters wanted to mostly talk about abortion and splits within the GOP over the Contract. A split in the news media is when 10 to 15 Republicans vote with the Democrats, not when 60 Democrats vote with the GOP.

Stop responding to these dopey questions. Switch the answer to what you want to talk about.

(5) Republicans need to make better connections between the solutions they are offering and the problems that most Americans want fixed.

Many mothers would rather stay at home and raise their children during their formative years but are forced into the work force because taxes take too much out of their family budget.

Shrinking government and reducing taxes helps strengthen families in our society. Expanding Individual Retirement Accounts helps middle-class Americans with retirement, college costs and first-time home buying.

(6) Always stay on offense and don't let up. As soon as you are forced on the defensive, you lose.

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