

Voters in Wisconsin and across the country sent a message that tax increases are sometimes justified; do the anti-tax pledge signers in Congress get it?

Grafton voters approved fire department upgrades that will raise their property taxes by \$77 on a \$250,000 home in the town and \$55 on a property of similar value in the village.

Voters in 27 Wisconsin school districts approved school spending referendums that will increase their property taxes. The 71% approval rate in Wisconsin school referendums on Nov. 6 was far above the average success rate of about 50%.

California voters approved a referendum that will increase the state sales and incomes taxes to help fund education and balance the state budget.

For the first time in more than 20 years, exit polls on Nov. 6 showed that American voters favor higher taxes for wealthy citizens. The presidential candidate who campaigned on raising taxes for people earning more than \$250,000 a year was elected.

In October, more than 80 CEOs of large corporations, the likes of Dow Chemical, Microsoft and Bank of America, placed full-page newspaper ads calling on Congress to raise taxes in addition to reducing spending to avoid the so-called fiscal cliff.

The message is clear: Americans support raising taxes for what they view as the right reasons — reasons such as improving fire protection, adequately funding education and paying for necessary federal government services while reducing the national debt.

As obvious as that message is, many in Congress are going to have trouble getting it. Among the House members and senators preparing to negotiate a way out of the looming fiscal crisis, 271 of 289 Republican members of Congress are encumbered by a document they signed pledging to never raise taxes.

A consensus that there will be no way out of the budget impasse and no way to bring down the national debt without raising taxes for the wealthiest payers has settled over the issue. Yet there is that pledge.

If the country goes over that fiscal cliff and sinks back into a recession because of a pledge that prohibits increasing tax revenue, it would be fair to say it was pushed over the edge by a lobbyist. A lobbyist? Now that's adding embarrassing insult to economic injury. The pledge was invented by Grover Norquist, a man not elected by anyone who is paid to wield influence in Congress to prevent increasing taxes.

Never raise taxes? Voters disagree

Written by Ozaukee Press

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This is the same lobbyist who said the government should be starved of tax revenue so that it is shrunken “to the size where I can drag it into the bathroom and drown it in the bathtub.”

That rancid sentiment is anathema to most Americans and there is growing evidence that some of the signers of the pledge are starting to understand that.

So how to get out of a pledge? Some Congress members are saying the pledge has sort of expired and wasn't meant to be forever. Others are redefining the term tax increase — eliminating deductions, even if that would result in higher taxes, would be OK. Perhaps some will say they were crossing their fingers when they signed it.

Or the signers could say something like this: We meant well, but signing the pledge was a mistake. We are not going to let a lobbyist determine the economic future of our country. We will consider raising taxes for high-income citizens so we can find a way for America to pay for the government services citizens need and reduce its debt.

Call it a Christmas wish.