

OUR VIEW

Grover may not get it, but some in GOP finally are

Devin Rokyta, for the editorial board

The GOP's failure to regain control of the Senate and White House - a surprisingly huge shock for the out-of-touch members of the party who predicted landslide victories in November - appears to have sent a message to at least a handful of Republicans.

In the days since the re-election of Barack Obama, key members of the party have distanced themselves from an anti-tax pledge pushed by Grover Norquist, a lobbyist and founder and president of Americans for Tax Reform. The pledge - which has been signed by 219 representatives and 39 senators in the upcoming Congress - commits signers to oppose any tax increases, for all time.

It has made compromise in D.C. impossible, at least if you view a compromise as both Republicans and Democrats making concessions.

So far, Democrats have said they are willing to negotiate on spending cuts and entitlement reform, but Norquist Republicans refuse to consider any increase in taxes, even on the wealthiest Americans. The effect is a standstill.

Recognizing the harm this pledge has and will continue to cause to the country, several high-profile senators, including Saxby Chambliss, R-Ga., Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., John McCain, R-Ariz., and Bob Corker, R-Tenn., along with several representatives, have publicly stated they will consider raising taxes, realizing the fiscal crisis demands a balanced approach to deficit reduction.

"I care more about my country than I do about a 20-year-old pledge," Chambliss told a Georgia TV station, echoing the view of some GOP representatives, who labeled the pledge a "straitjacket" and an impediment to dealing with the deficit and debt.

Where was that sort of sentiment the past four years?

The new common-sense approach should be welcome news to the nation, with the national debt sitting at \$16.3 trillion and federal tax revenue at a six-decade low as a percentage of gross domestic product.

Norquist, however, still won't budge and is making threats to the dissenting. He's promised a primary challenge to any member of Congress who puts revenues on the negotiating table, and

that he and Americans for Tax Reform would "certainly highlight who has kept their commitment and who hasn't."

That highlighting may not be such a bad thing as Americans become more aware of Norquist's bullying and the harm he and his followers are inflicting on the country.