

***By Russ Pankonin, The Imperial Republican Co-Publisher***

One of the key elements being bantered around in this year's presidential race centers on the ongoing growth of this nation's budget deficit.

Despite all the raucous rhetoric being spewed by both parties, one thing's for sure—this country can't keep going deeper into debt, day after day, year after year.

The Dems blame the problem on the economy it inherited from the previous Bush administration. The Republicans instead say President Obama's economic policies have failed and that's why we're in the mess we're in.

Every day this fiscal crisis continues, this nation's superpower status erodes, a bit at a time.

But while each of us want to point the finger at Washington, we, as a society, have become all too accustomed to relying on government, regardless of our party affiliation.

I don't believe anyone will argue against the goal of cutting government, except when it affects them directly. There's a definite attitude in this country that it's fine to cut spending and programs, but don't mess with the one that benefits me.

We want change in the way government operates, but are we willing to make the sacrifices to effect that change?

As each generation strives to make it better for their children than they had it, the downside is the sense of entitlement that results.

It's created a shift in thinking to where people now think they should be entitled to a good job, a nice home, a fancy car. And when things go bad, instead of pulling up our boot straps, we look to the government for help.

Whether it's disaster aid, drought aid, housing aid, highway aid (and the list goes on and on), we all want the benefits that accompany that federal aid, as long as someone else is paying for it.

And of course, we look to Uncle Sam to pay the bill. The problem is, Uncle Sam is us! But we, as a nation, keep borrowing money to feed this sense of entitlement.

If this country is to regain the economic superpower status it once had, each and every one of us need to be willing to make some sacrifices to make that happen.

Maybe it comes in the form of less federal aid. Maybe it comes from a reduction of governmental services. Maybe it comes by paying more taxes. Or, a combination of all of the above.

Whatever the case, our federal government is broken and it's the regular Joes, like you and I, who are going to be responsible for fixing it—one way or another. I can only hope we are up to the challenge.