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Who are the takers?

Pat Perriello | Nov. 15, 2012 NCR Today

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The answer to that question is that all Americans are takers in relation to the federal government. Thomas Schaller writes a powerful article for the *Baltimore Sun* [1]that highlights those receiving assistance from our federal government.

A lot of comments have been made about how the Obama coalition consists of takers. Even Mitt Romney in assessing his loss to Obama blamed the loss on all the gifts Obama gave [2] to Blacks, Hispanics, and young people.

Schaller notes that conservatives and seniors also receive government assistance. In fact, he reports that 96 percent of Americans have received benefits from one or more federal programs. He mentions some of the more obvious programs, including student loans, home mortgage deductions, Medicare and the employer health care deduction.

It turns out that the 4 percent who have received no benefits are generally those too young to qualify for benefits.

Thus, we are all takers.

Many government programs are in fact designed with middle- and upper-class Americans in mind. Specifically, Schaller mentions Tea Party darling Michelle Bachmann, who received government subsidies for her family farm and her husband?s business.

Consider how many government programs like social security and Medicare are geared toward senior citizens, who were an important part of the Romney coalition.

Consider also the benefits that accrue to powerful corporate interests. These interests include defense contractors, energy companies, agricultural interests, as well as subsidies to companies involved in international marketing.

Finally, Schaller points out that even the talk radio and T.V. personalities who spend their time ranting against the Obama takers are the beneficiaries of coveted government licenses that result in billions of dollars in advertising revenue.

The conservative media have done an outstanding job of controlling the message regarding the size of government. They have convinced much of the public that the government is providing entitlements to nonproductive elements of society, and that such government spending is the cause of our financial difficulties and the failure of hard working families to thrive. Schaller does an excellent job of demonstrating the fallacy of such an argument.

Additionally, I believe the Republicans themselves have done a good job this election year of demonstrating the

flaws in their own argument. In too many instances they have attempted to overreach, and their arguments have appeared too extreme to the average voter.

They have shown themselves to be insensitive to the real needs of average Americans. The comment Governor Romney made regarding 47 percent of the electorate [3] has illustrated the party?s lack of interest in average Americans and has shown the GOP to be, essentially, interested only in the welfare of the 1 percent.

All of us need to ask ourselves, what is the government doing for us?

Do we want the government to stop doing these things, be it Medicare, social security etc.? If not, do we begrudge the poor who have no advocate in Washington to have assistance from the government for some of their basic needs?

Can we therefore agree that we have a collective responsibility for each other in this country? And if we adopt a balanced approach to taxation, spending, and federal programs, we can better succeed in producing that ?more perfect union? for all of our citizens?

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