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# WITNESS FOR JUSTICE

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**Elected to Serve, not hold US Hostage**

## **Bentley de Bardelaben**

Sadly, American politics seem to be more partisan than not. One party tends to hold the other party hostage in an effort to do the bidding of a very small public minority. Yet, who is listening to and representing the masses? When is the will of the American people who elect politicians honored? Despite the will of the people to manage the out—of—control spending of the federal government and reduce the ballooning U.S. deficit, Congress is debating the extension of the current tax rates to all. If such a decision passes, the government will be adding trillions of dollars to an already bottomless deficit. I understand that there must be give and take among the parties in order to govern the majority. However, it often feels as if there is more taking than giving, i.e. taking from the poor and middle classes and giving to the wealthiest.

A recent CBS news poll indicated that 53% of Americans want to extend the Bush-era tax cuts only for households earning less than \$250,000 per year. 26% of Americans want tax cuts to continue for all. 14% say let them expire. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the median household income in 2008 was \$52,175. By my calculations the poor and middle classes make up the majority of our population. Tax assistance ought to be offered to those carrying the heaviest economic burden.

When might this happen? I don't want to be placated with rhetoric any longer. I and many like me want real results. If not, politicians risk constituents becoming further disenchanting and unlikely to show up at the polls. I am totally comfortable with picking up my proverbial toys, walking off the playground and going home. A lame duck Congress need not take the word *lame* literally. The American people expect those elected to government positions to listen and act responsibly.

The ratification of the START arms treaty, the extension of unemployment benefits as well as the repeal of the “don't ask, don't tell” policy are just some of the legislative issues before the Congress who soon will be off for another holiday recess. In the season when “good tidings to all men and women” are expressed nationwide, our current state of politics regrettably translates like Ebenezer Scrooge's worldview, “bah-humbug!” His standard reply to embracing communal life can be loosely decoded “I've got mine; I don't care if you have or how you get yours”.

Is this what more than a generation of economic entitlement or corporate greed has wrought? Policies which peddle impossible theory such as “tickle down economics,” which have not, nor can ever benefit the “common man or woman” as promised. Americans are savvy people. We are not going to blindly follow leaders who do not act in the best interest of the people they were elected to serve. Truly, we may not ask for a “quid pro quo” as payment for a vote cast. Neither are we going to stand for a “shell game” con promoted as “the answer to our problems” when common sense and prior experiences have proven otherwise. Sorry senators, not on my watch.

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