

By Rep. Allen West

WASHINGTON (MarketWatch) — Gov. Mitt Romney's comments about the percentage of Americans who have grown economically dependent on the government for their sustenance, and as a result, see little benefit in changing course, is neither new nor outrageous.

More than 170 years ago, the French political thinker and writer, Alexis de Tocqueville saw this coming, and warned of its dangers in his most famous writing, *Democracy in America*. Here is an excerpt below:

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"A democracy cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until the voters discover that they can vote themselves largesse from the public treasury. From that moment on, the majority always votes for the candidates promising the most benefits from the public treasury with the result that a democracy always collapses over loose fiscal policy, always followed by a dictatorship."

Our public treasury cannot sustain further "largesse." Our national debt has ballooned to more than \$16 trillion. The top 25 percent of wage earners contribute 87 percent of all tax revenue and it is numerically impossible to tax them sufficiently to pay for this expansion of federal government – let alone pay down our debt. For another viewpoint, read Rex Nutting's column on the 47%.

ECONOMY AND POLITICS

Romney on the 47%

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Our entire fiscal and monetary policy is now based on one simple axiom: What we cannot tax, we borrow, and what we cannot borrow, we print.

The path we are on in 2012 is perilous and unsustainable. We must change course.

This November, Americans will not simply be choosing one man or another as president, they will be choosing the future direction of these United States of America.

The question is not whether one candidate is nicer or more likable or even easier to relate to. The fundamental question all Americans must ask themselves is what kind of a nation shall we be? And what does it mean to be an American?

Since 2009, our nation has changed dramatically. Work force participation is at a 31-year low, and millions of Americans have simply given up looking for a job. While 43 straight months of unemployment at or above 8% is dismal enough, it is not even the whole awful truth.

The true level of unemployment, based on the U6 computation rate (including unemployed, underemployed, and discouraged workers) is now at 14.7%, climbing more than 3 percentage points since President Barack Obama took office.

Despite our federal government's borrowing over a trillion dollars each of the last three years in order to expand "investment" and "stimulate our economy," we now have a record number of Americans in poverty and a record number on food stamps.

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[Political fallout of Romney's 47% comments](#)

[Jerry Seib on Lunch Break looks at the potential political fallout for Mitt Romney from his comments in a video that describe his opponent's supporters as feeling entitled to aid. Photo: AP.](#)

The fact is, the Obama administration is fostering a nation of dependency.

As a result, the very foundations of our nation, and the principles upon which this Republic prospered and succeeded, have been turned upside down.

Instead of unleashing the indomitable American spirit of free enterprise, this administration and their liberal progressive acolytes seek to punish success, by taxing those who create jobs and produce goods and services, and re-distributing it to those who do not.

Sadly, those Americans who depend so heavily on government programs seem the most unaware that the programs upon which they rely on are in danger of disappearing altogether. As Margaret Thatcher stated so eloquently, "The problem with socialism is that you eventually run out of other people's money. "

It is not "compassionate" to promise more and more government benefits when it is our children and grandchildren who will be forced to pay for them. It is not "caring" to encourage greater and greater dependence on a system destined for collapse without reform.

Many of the 47% to which Gov. Romney referred (actually closer to 48.6%) must understand it is the liberal progressive policies of President Obama that have forced them into dependency. Their path to prosperity lies with economic freedom and an unfettered market, not more government and bureaucracy.

In this election, Americans must wake up to the facts, and more importantly, to the reality of what lies ahead if we do not reform our mandatory spending programs, reduce the regulatory red tape strangling our small businesses, institute sound fiscal and tax policies, and slow down the growth of the welfare nanny-state.

Allen B. West is a Republican congressman from Florida.

