

# North Indy Star

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## GUEST COLUMN

# Obama faces difficult spending choices

President-elect Barack Obama has resurrected the spoken word capturing the imagination and ideals of many Americans. His victory speech on Nov. 4 utilized metaphors as we viewed history and the future through the lens of Ann Nixon



SEN.  
MIKE DELPH

Cooper, a 106-year-old African-American woman, whose life has spanned racial, economic and cultural challenges.

Today we are concerned about the economy and national public finance. With the partial nationalization of the banking system, the bailouts of AIG and others, taxpayers are exposed to a possible \$2.25 trillion addition to the national debt. Now the auto industry is making its case for public support of private industry.

Consider that the per-capita national debt in 1992 was between \$16,000 and \$20,000. In 2008, prior to the bailout, it was just under \$35,000. It's no wonder that the national debt clock ran out of digits with total national debt fast approaching \$11 trillion.

There are basically two ways government spends your money. One is through the front door of taxation and the other is through the back door of borrowing or credit. Accountants will tell you that you want to borrow for the future using the matching principle, a principle that aligns future cost with future benefit. But are there limits?

At the national level, about 18 cents out of every dollar spent pays the cost of interest on our borrowing habit. Economists forecast that number to only in-

crease as our dependence on the debt continues to grow exponentially. All this adds up to very difficult spending choices for our new president. More importantly, it will result in very difficult lifestyle consequences for our children and grandchildren and their posterity.

A recent Associated Press report indicates that deficit spending could race from the billion-dollar range to the trillion-dollar range. It seems that living within one's means and free market economics have been lost on Washington.

I can't imagine the stories that Ann Nixon Cooper could share. But a couple of questions that I would want to ask her are:

- » How do you think the country grew almost its entire national debt in your lifetime?
- » Have we become too loose with

money and convenience?

» Have we moved our cultural values to the side in favor of unbridled materialism and secular humanism?

I see people looking to Washington for a solution that can be found only by a collective refocus on faith, family and excellence.

I wonder if Ann Nixon Cooper would agree.

Yes, President-elect Obama's speech was good, as was Sen. John McCain's concession speech. Now we must unite as Americans and give our new commander in chief our support. I just hope that his math is as good as his speech making.

\* State Sen. Mike Delph, R-Carmel, represents Carmel and Indianapolis in the General Assembly. He and his wife, Beth, are the parents of five daughters, Abby, 14; Evelyn, 11; Anna, 9; Emma, 5; and Lilly, 2.