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OPINION

The trillion-dollar standard

BY RICH LOWRY

At least the word "trillion" still has cachet as denoting a lot of money. "Billion" has been surpassed during the past few months, and "million" has long been positively quaint.

The Obama team wants to keep its two-year stimulus plan (just) beneath a trillion dollars, sensing that 13 figures is the price point when the public might balk at the fiscal bacchanal. (The entire Pentagon budget is \$500 billion.)

That Congress will take more time, into February, to pass the bill constitutes a notable act of fiscal restraint in the Age of Obama. Otherwise, congressmen will make like those Germans who lived through the hyperinflation of Weimar Germany — and shove cash out the door in wheelbarrows. Mr. Obama's team wants to get 80 votes for the stimulus plan in the Senate, and took a step toward it with word that it is considering \$300 billion worth of tax cuts as part of the plan.

Sure, that's a tax cut "only" in the hundreds of billions. But consider: President Bush's first tax cut, \$1.35 trillion over 10 years, delivered \$174 billion in tax relief in its first two

years. Mr. Obama is nearly doubling Mr. Bush's cuts that were denounced by Democrats as recklessly profligate. Mr. Bush's second tax cut in 2003 cost \$350 billion over 10 years. Mr. Obama is engaged in shameless fiscal logrolling, hoping to pick up Republicans by devoting roughly 40 percent of his plan to tax cuts.

They are characteristic Obama tax cuts, with a strong whiff of spending about them. He wants to give people \$500 tax credits — a version of the \$131 billion stimulus that didn't work in early 2008 — and throw a bunch of tax benefits at business, including a credit for hiring. None of this is as straightforward — nor will it provide as much economic benefit — as simply cutting the payroll tax for working people or cutting the corporate tax rate for business.

Even with tax cuts absorbing some of his plan, Mr. Obama is testing the outer limits of spending. The federal government spends about \$60 billion a year on transportation and other sorts of infrastructure. As Harvard economist Edward Glaeser points out, doubling that amount still "would represent only 8 percent of a \$750 billion package." Mr.

Obama might be reduced to the expedient suggested by John Maynard Keynes of burying money in bottles and then paying people to dig it up (some of the projects on the "shovel-ready" list compiled by the nation's mayors are only marginally less foolhardy).

During the campaign, Mr. Obama was careful always to say — less than honestly — that his spending proposals were paid for. Now, it doesn't matter. Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland left a begging voice message with Obama chief of staff Rahm Emanuel that captured the moment perfectly: "Rahm, it's Ted. You've never failed me, and I need \$5 billion."

The stimulus spending — or most of it — will eventually disappear, and Mr. Obama will have to raise taxes. The fiction of his campaign was that repealing the Bush tax cuts on the rich would pay for everything. Repeal probably gets \$50 billion a year, which in Washington's newly adjusted fiscal lexicon is negligible. It takes a trillion to get anyone's attention. And "quadrillion" comes next. ■

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.

GUEST OPINION

Get up-close look at wildlife rehab at new CROW Education Center

Recently, the Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife released a Snowy Egret that was found entangled in some fishing line back to the Egret's home at the Estero Aquatic Preserve. A couple of good Samaritans had brought the bird into the CROW hospital, where Dr. P.J. Deitschel and her staff nursed the patient back to health with anti-inflammatory medicine, Chinese herbs and other supportive care.

This fortunate bird was just one of approximately 4,000 wildlife patients that CROW treats every year. Former Sanibel Island resident Shirley Walter founded CROW in 1968. Since then, it has provided veterinary care for more than 60,000 of Southwest Florida's sick, injured and orphaned wildlife "behind the scenes" for 40 years.

CROW cares for shore birds, sea turtles, gopher tortoises, bobcats, armadillos, otters and owls, just to name a few. Its annual patient load has increased an astounding 400 percent over the past 25 years.

CROW's wildlife patients come not

only from Sanibel Island, where the hospital is located; 84 percent come from other Lee County locations and beyond. CROW's mission is to rescue, care for and restore these animals to health so that they can be released back into their natural environment.

On Jan. 25, CROW will celebrate the grand opening of its new Visitor Education Center and the new, nearly complete wildlife rehabilitation hospital — the culmination of five years of fundraising and planning. The Visitor Education Center, which will undoubtedly become a new tourist destination, will enable CROW to give the public an up-close view of the incredible and worthwhile work its veterinarians, hospital staff, students and volunteers do on a daily basis. It will also serve to expand CROW's educational offerings and teach residents and tourists alike how they can live more harmoniously with wildlife and help prevent many of the wildlife injuries that humans inadvertently cause.

The center will immerse visitors in the world of wildlife rescue and rehabili-

tation with displays of the many types of wildlife CROW has treated, video and photos of hospital activity, a touch screen game called "Be the Vet," case studies, and a host of other interactive exhibits, plus a gift shop.

Additionally, CROW will soon open a new, upgraded 4,800-square-foot wildlife rehabilitation hospital, which will allow them to serve their patients more efficiently. Tours will be offered at the grand opening celebration.

As a long-time board member of this outstanding organization, I invite the entire community to celebrate the official grand opening of CROW's new facility at a free celebration on Sunday, Jan. 25, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Everyone who visits will enjoy the festivities and walk away more knowledgeable about protecting our native wildlife. ■

— *Geoffrey Roepstorff*
Fort Myers

Note: For more information about the opening of CROW's new visitor center, see page A18.

MOMENTS IN TIME

• On **Jan. 14, 1870**, the first recorded use of a donkey to represent the Democratic Party appears in Harper's Weekly, drawn by political illustrator Thomas Nast. Four years later, Nast originated the use of an elephant to symbolize the Republican Party.

• On **Jan. 15, 1981**, "Hill Street Blues," television's landmark cops-and-robbers drama, debuts on NBC. "Hill Street Blues" not only changed the way Americans viewed police officers, it also revolutionized television drama itself. The full squad house of regulars on

the show rarely resolved cases in one episode.

• On **Jan. 16, 1945**, Adolf Hitler takes to his underground bunker, where he remains for 105 days until he commits suicide. Both he and his wife, Eva Braun swallowed cyanide capsules, which had been tested for their efficacy on his dog Blondi and her pups.

• On **Jan. 17, 1916**, a group of golf professionals and several leading amateur golfers gather at the Taplow Club in New York City in a meeting that will

result in the founding of the Professional Golfers Association (PGA). On April 10, 1916, the PGA was officially established with 35 charter members.

• On **Jan. 18, 1958**, hockey player Willie O'Ree of the Boston Bruins takes to the ice for a game against the Montreal Canadiens, becoming the first black to play in the National Hockey League (NHL). It would be 16 years before another black player, Ontario's Mike Marson, played in the NHL. ■

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