

## EDITORIAL: Ensign's straight talk

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Nevada Republican Sen. John Ensign joined the Senate Finance Committee this summer. And he's concerned about what he's been hearing there, both in public and in private discussions.

Like the scorpion being ferried across the creek on the back of the frog, one would think the Democrats would wait to reach the other side before indulging their urge to sting.

All they have to do is pretend to be satisfied with their current record pile of tax loot for another 14 months, after all, and they might expect to do pretty well in the next elections, at which point they'd be set loose like kids in a candy shop.

But they can't wait. It's just not in their nature, darn it.

"There are certainly some taxes I believe the (Democrats) are going to try to raise this fall," the senator warns.

Democrats will need to find additional tax hikes to offset the "cost" of reversing some of the bracket creep that has led to more middle-class families being whacked with the "alternative minimum tax" -- a congressional money grab in which wage-earners are penalized for using "too many" of the deductions Congress itself created.

Democrats also plan to allow some of the Bush tax cuts to expire in 2010, Sen. Ensign warns -- a step which they will claim is "not a tax hike" even though it will result in more Americans paying more taxes.

The problem with such scheming is that America must now compete for investment capital with foreign markets that have finally started to wise up. A study of 86 countries by KPMG International last year showed that tax cuts attracted investment, with predicted revenue losses "offset by new revenue from increased hiring and spending," Sen. Ensign pointed out in a Thursday floor speech. "Sound familiar? It's the economic plan that in the 1980s helped raise our nation out of one of our worst economic situations."

But today that strategy is being applied overseas, not here, Sen. Ensign warns. "Today our economy is strong because of tax relief that the Republican Congress provided, but that is the past." But today, in contrast, "The corporate income tax rate in American is the second-highest in the industrialized world.

Rather than looking for ways to raise taxes, I believe this Congress should be looking for ways to make us more competitive by lowering taxes."

Democrats scoff that such talk is just about "tax cuts for the wealthy" -- Republicans going to bat for their fat cat friends.

But is it really "greedy" for hard-working doctors, architects, airline pilots and small-business owners to want to hang onto two-thirds of what is in many cases a smaller paycheck than they enjoyed a decade ago, thanks to regulation and inflation?

Do we really want to make sure that "rich" person can no longer invest in American companies that create American jobs? Why? Because we believe Charlie Rangel and Barney Frank and Henry Waxman and Nancy Pelosi will prove wiser stewards of our wealth?