

Two Orange County Republican House members may agree with the president-elect on his diagnosis of the nation's economic distress but they don't totally buy his prescription. And so far one lawmaker says **Barack Obama** may be overstating the problem.

I talked to Reps. **Ken Calvert**, **John Campbell** and **Ed Royce** today after Obama gave his speech at George Mason University in which he called for immediate sweeping action to turn around what he says is the worst economic situation in our lifetimes.

"Certainly we're going through difficult times," said Calvert,

R-Corona. "In certain sectors of our economy it is the worst since the Depression." But, he said, "It's too simplistic to say everyone is in this."

Beyond Obama possibly overstating the problem, Calvert doesn't believe "borrowing unlimited amounts of money is the only way that we can get this economy moving again. I still think history has proven that growth in the economy is what we need."

Like many in his Republican party, Calvert is saying that tax cuts are better than more government spending.

Calvert and the other reps I talked to didn't close the door on the kind of infrastructure projects that Obama believes will stimulate the economy and provide jobs. But it depends on the projects. And the scope.

Calvert is also not a definite yes on any kind of tax cuts. Obama is talking about \$1,000 for families with incomes under about \$200,000 – that means 95 percent of working families, he said.

But Calvert worries that Obama and the Democrats want to give tax cuts to people who don't earn enough to pay federal income taxes.

“This will be the mother of all stimulus packages,” Calvert said. “We are in a hole. But to get out of the hole are we going to dig ourselves a deeper hole that we’re going to have to be paying for for a long long long time?”

Overall, Campbell was more positive about Obama’s speech.

“I agree with him,” said Campbell, R-Irvine. The economy, he said, “is certainly worse than anything I’ve witnessed in my working life. I think he correctly has recognized and identified the problem and is moving toward a solution and I hope it’s one we can all agree on.”

Where Campbell is wary of Obama’s message is with the spending proposals.

“I’m looking that everything we do in this thing should be simulative,” and not all the spending Obama is proposing in Campbell’s view is.

For instance, Campbell’s not thrilled with the notion of spending billions refurbishing schools in terms of that being enough bang for the buck.

“I think we have to be as targeted and as immediate as possible with the tax cuts so we get people off the couch, taking some risk, hiring some people and buying some things,” Campbell said.

Royce also agreed with Obama’s analysis of the problem but he’s focused on today’s news that the deficit this year will be \$1.19 trillion.

“If we added the one trillion additional that President-elect Obama and the Democrats are scheduling, then that would leave us with the largest deficit certainly in our history,” Royce said.

The Fullerton Republican strongly opposes the kind of government spending Obama is proposing. He wants a market-based solution that revolves around such things as making it easier for people to rework their home loans. And Royce would go back to pre-1986 tax laws that allow people to deduct all their sales tax and interest expenses for cars. That, he said, would stimulate investment and get people to buy cars.

“You should go through this item by item in an attempt to do this in a way that’s not going to increase the deficit by a trillion dollars,” Royce said.

Royce is also not convinced that despite what Obama said today about no earmarks – individual lawmaker projects – that such pork won’t be being included in the stimulus package.

“Nearly every industry is looking for a deal in the stimulus package,” Royce said. “It’s a feeding frenzy.”