

Rep. Paul Ryan is getting quite a bit of attention this week for his ideas on how to address the country's fiscal crisis and bring down federal deficit spending.

Ryan, a Janesville Republican, has been touting a plan that he calls his "Roadmap for America's Future" since 2008. But it appears to have gotten more traction recently as a counterweight to the federal budget proposal unveiled by President Barack Obama on Monday.

In the last few days, Ryan has been on Fox News Sunday, CNBC and MSNBC. He has been featured in the Washington Post and The New York Times and the conservative magazines the Weekly Standard and National Review.

He also has had the chance to grill White House Budget Director Peter Orszag and Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner during congressional hearings this week on the president's budget plan.

At a Ways and Means hearing Wednesday, Ryan sharply questioned Geithner about the Obama administration's call for a bipartisan commission that would recommend ways to cut deficit spending.

"Why aren't you giving us a budget, not punting to a commission, why aren't you giving us a budget that using your own standards and definitions actually is sustainable?" Ryan asked.

Geithner: "Congressman, we're proposing a budget that takes the huge mess we inherited and cuts the deficits dramatically."

Ryan: "You can blame Bush only so long."

Geithner: "It's just a factual thing."

Republicans were similarly critical about a fiscal commission Tuesday. At a House Budget Committee hearing, Rep. John Campbell (R-Calif.) plugged Ryan's "Roadmap" plan while questioning Orszag on the need for a commission.

"The president has to punt it to a commission, when one guy from Wisconsin has come up with a proposal that everyone agrees actually works," he said.

Orszag called Ryan's plan a "serious proposal" that addresses "our long-term fiscal problem" but does so in ways that would gain little support within the administration.

"It does so in a way that many policy-makers might find objectionable," he said.

Democrats have criticized Ryan's bill, saying he would cut deficits by turning Medicare into a voucher program for people under 55; introducing individual accounts for the Social Security program; and eliminating the tax preference for employer-sponsored insurance.

Supporters of a commission say Congress has failed for years to rein in spending and that lawmakers need to try another approach.