

## I'm Not Kidding

*By Hap Hansen*

A billion dollars is not much more than pocket change to a tax-and-spend advocate in Congress. I'm not kidding. And with a trillion dollar economy pulsating throughout America, a billion dollars is obviously not what it used to be. Just kidding! As a politician once said, "A billion here, a billion there, and pretty soon you're talking about real money!"

For a lay person like me, it's hard to imagine just how much a billion dollars really is. No kidding. Let's see if we can put a billion dollars in perspective: Let's assume you have a spendthrift friend and you have unlimited cash. Tiring of your friend's monetary ways, you say to him, "Here's a million dollars. You go spend a thousand dollars a day and come back to me for more money when you run out." Your friend will return for more money in a little less than three years. Not wanting to see your friend even that often, you give him a billion dollars when he returns. Provided with the same one thousand dollar per day spending instructions, your friend will not come back for more cash in over 2,700 years!

Obviously a billion dollars is a whole bunch of money, but few of us can imagine how utterly wealthy we would be if we were billionaires. Here's a frightening statistic: The top eight of the world's billionaires have more money than one-half of the lowest income people on earth! Here's another frightening statistic: Unfortunately, we are now over 21 trillion dollars in debt and still counting. Politicians spend a billion dollars as though it were nothing more than pocket change. Not kidding! But every time a billion dollars is spent by Congress, it is the equivalent of you having to provide four dollars personally. And so does your spouse, your child, your mother, your father, brother, sister, cousin, aunt and uncle, in addition to every other man, woman and child in the United States. And this does not include State, County and Local taxes.

Years ago, A.P. Herbert wrote: "Well, fancy giving money to the government! Might as well put it down the drain. Fancy giving money to the government. Nobody will see the stuff again!"

It's obvious that we have to provide money through taxes so that the government can pay its bills and fulfill its obligations. But I don't think it's too much to ask that they provide those services in an efficient and economically sound way. After all, it's my four bucks too! And I'm not kidding!