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Hillary Clinton for President

The secretary of state could mount a formidable challenge to Obama

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America's economy is failing to produce jobs, increase growth or raise confidence, and it will likely get even worse next year. Our federal government's spending has increased to \$3.7 trillion this year from \$2.98 trillion in 2008. Publicly held national debt is up by \$2.4 trillion in less than two years, to about 63% percent of GDP from 40%, and is expected to reach 70% by 2012. Add in the unemployment rate, which has remained above 9.4% for over a year, and America is clearly failing economically.

Next January the economy will be further depressed by increasing tax rates. The top income tax rate will rise to 39.6% from 35%, and the phase-out of itemized deductions and personal exemptions will effectively lift the top bracket to about 40.8%. On New Year's Day the tax on dividends is scheduled to go up to 39.6% from 15%, and come 2013, ObamaCare will add another 3.8%.

Other bad public policies will further drag down the economy. ObamaCare will increase individual costs and expand the deficit. Failing energy policies, from Washington's inept response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill to its effort to limit tapping America's oil supplies, will drive up our use of imported foreign oil

beyond the current 67% of our country's oil consumption.

Add together all these increases in government regulation, spending and taxes and a dim employment outlook, and the result is a dramatic national decline in support of the White House, Congress and their administration of our national policies.

So what can be done to change America's policies and make our economy stronger? For one thing, we could elect a president with different thinking. Almost any Republican candidate would have that, and, as we will see in a moment, there is one obvious Democrat who would change our course too.

And why would the Democratic Party want to do that? Because the re-election of President Obama is becoming more problematic. The latest Rasmussen Reports polls show the dramatic decline of the presidential approval index, the difference between those who "strongly approve" of Mr. Obama's performance and those who "strongly disapprove." It began at plus 25% when the new president was sworn in, and has steadily declined to minus 13%.

It isn't just the president whose poll numbers are falling fast. According to recent Harris

polling, Vice President Biden viewed favorably by 26% of the public and unfavorably by 45%. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi does even worse, 20% positive to 49% negative. A June Nevada poll gave Sen. Harry Reid, the majority leader, 33% approval and 52% disapproval.

But the greatest contrast and most interesting statistic is Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's ratings: 45% favorable and only 35% unfavorable.

That is not surprising, and there are some obvious factors that suggest she might have a chance of defeating President Obama if she were to challenge him for the 2012 Democratic nomination.

First, as Peggy Noonan wrote earlier this month, the conclusion one hears from most "normal" American people is that the president "is in over his head, and out of his depth." Even most progressives agree that "the Obama presidency has been a big disappointment," according to Eric Alterman of The Nation. That means there's a big opportunity for Mrs. Clinton.

Second, she is physically and intellectually strong enough to take on a difficult campaign. She showed that running against Obama two years ago.

Third, she is one of the most experienced prospective candidates the Democratic Party has had in a long while: wife of a governor, U.S. first lady, senator and now secretary of state. This is a good record to run on as someone who knows how the government works.

Fourth, she is an experienced foreign-policy adviser who understands the threats to our national security: unresolved conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, rising threats of nuclear capability in Iran and North Korea, and uncertainties in Pakistan.

Fifth, experience will be even more important to voters in the 2012 presidential election, whose 2008 gamble on someone with little experience is proving costly.

Finally, Washington's deadly left-liberal policies that have propelled the American economy in a very bad direction can be turned around. If Mrs. Clinton made the case that America must get rid of the huge debt the current administration has created, must create much better economic growth with lower tax rates, and must strongly assist employer job creation, she would appeal to a broad voter coalition.

All this must be obvious to the inner circle of the current president's administration. So what is he to do? That's pretty simple--just add his secretary of state to the 2012 ticket as his new running mate.

We don't know whether Mr. Obama is already thinking about making this kind of change next year, but we do know he needs some very good policy outcomes to be re-elected. And if none of these Obama changes come to pass, Mrs. Clinton could put together a very effective campaign to get the nomination for herself.

Considering how badly things are going in America just now, that could turn out to be a slam dunk for her and the disgruntled Democratic Party.