

Community Comment Dec. 10th, 2012
By Jon Sapper

This is Jon Sapper for Community Comment.

I consider myself kind of a numbers guy and certainly fiscally conservative, so I have been following this fiscal cliff and national debt stuff. I have to admit though, that when the folks in Washington throw around the national debt number of 16 trillion dollars, what does that number really mean? Now I apologize that I'm gonna run a bunch of numbers by you, but I think they illustrate just how big 16 trillion is.

Let's start with a hundred dollar bill. Most of us have seen one. If we stack a hundred of them together, we have \$10,000 and it's about ½" thick. You can put that in your pocket. A million dollars is 100 of those ½" stacks or one stack roughly four feet high. You can put that in a paper grocery bag. A hundred million dollars in \$100 bills will fit on a four foot by four foot wooden pallet and will be about four feet high. You still with me? When we get to a billion dollars, we're getting up there.....It's that 4 foot x 4 foot pallet stacked 40 feet high with \$100 bills. Now that's starting to get impressive.

So let's talk about a trillion dollars. What does that look like? It's that 40 foot stack of \$100 bills times a thousand or that pallet 40,000 feet high. That's almost 8 miles folks. And since we have over 16 trillion dollars in debt, that pallet of \$100 bills climbs to over 120 miles high. You know, a few more years of this and it's going to be a lot of money.

Forbes calculated that our current national debt equates to about \$128,000 for every American household or about \$46,000 for each of us..... and it's rising.

You ever heard of the line that our national debt is in the stratosphere. Well, that's not true. Our stratosphere is between 6 and 30 miles up. We blew through that 10 years ago. 120 miles up is where the Space Shuttle fliesor rather flew. I just figured out one of the reasons why they stopped the Shuttle program. They didn't want it to hit that stack of \$100 bills.

Now I don't know how we're going to get out of this mess, but at least we can sleep well at night knowing that Washington has it under control. I think I need a nap.

This has been Jon Sapper for Community Comment.