

Highly premature — and costly — to support ‘a gallery of dreams’

In his April 2 op-ed column, “A GOP lawmaker pursues a gallery of dreams,” Fred Hiatt acknowledged that he didn’t know whether any savings would be generated by a Republican congressman’s proposal to require that the General Services Administration turn over the Federal Trade Commission’s headquarters to the National Gallery of Art. Well, it turns out that, according to a report last week by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, the scheme would cost taxpayers \$270 million in the next five years.

The column dismissed the commissioners’ reactions as mere “sputtering.” But, as I told Mr. Hiatt, as a taxpayer, a Republican and a deficit hawk, I don’t understand how any member of Congress, let alone a Republican, could adopt this scheme as his “only priority” as a committee chairman before so much as (1) holding any hearing on the matter; (2) identifying where the FTC would end up; (3) determining the fair market value of the government property that was to be turned over to a partially private organization such as the National Gallery; and (4) obtaining an impartial evaluation of the cost of the proposal to taxpayers.

If my fellow Republicans in the House are serious about tackling our huge deficit, this project ought to be shelved.

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