

## Government looks to sell assets to raise cash

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Very rarely do officials and members of Congress of all political stripes find an area of complete agreement. But sometimes it does happen. One such instance is the selling of government assets that are no longer useful or necessary. It's politically harmless – raising money in a time when revenues have been significantly affected by the recession.

*The New York Times* [explains](#) this rare phenomenon:

Deep within President Obama's proposals to raise revenue and reduce the deficit lies a method that has garnered bipartisan support, something rare in Washington these days. It involves selling an island, courthouses, maybe an airstrip, generally idle or underused vehicles, roads, buildings, land — even the airwaves used to broadcast television.

Among the listings: Plum Island, N.Y., off the North Fork of Long Island, which the government has already begun marketing as 840 acres of “sandy shoreline, beautiful views and a harbor.” As former home to the federal Animal Disease Center, it may need a bit of “biohazard remediation,” making it a real fixer-upper.

Many conservatives — including Representative Paul Ryan of Wisconsin, chairman of the House Budget Committee, and the budget experts at the Cato Institute — support the broad idea of shrinking the government by selling parts of it. Democrats like the idea of virtually painless revenue-raising.

But characteristic of Washington, even something so reasonable with such broad support faces a number of obstacles.

Whether Congress can pass any bill in the current atmosphere, however, is far from certain ... and there are plenty of bureaucratic obstacles in the way even if Congress approves.

Like a lot of things in Washington, selling federal property is tangled in red tape. To sell airwaves, for instance, Congress would need to pass a law. Selling off property requires a multistep process that includes other agencies looking it over to see if they could use it, and another check to see if it might be a good candidate for a homeless shelter or some other public purpose. Only if it fails various tests is property finally offered to the public.

These chances don't come around very often. Washington must get its act together and take advantage of any opportunity that is supported by both parties and helps the nation's bottom line.