

## Perspectives on the news



*News keeps churning 24/7, and Jay Evensen, drawing on nearly 30 years of experience as a reporter and opinion writer, always has a thought-provoking take. Read his insights, filled with links to interesting stories and the occasional video. Then chime in with your own views.*

### 9 percent unemployment a re-election killer

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**Jay Evensen**

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Here's an interesting tidbit [from the New York Times](#): No president since Franklin Roosevelt has won re-election with an unemployment rate higher than 7.2 percent on Election Day.

A lot of experts are saying Barack Obama would have to break that spell if he is to win in 2012.

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The Times piece by Binyamin Appelbaum goes on to explain why Washington isn't going to do much more in terms of stimulus spending or other "job-producing" programs between now and Election Day. Republicans won't go for it, and there is a general feeling that Washington can't afford it.

A lot of economic alarm bells are sounding this week. [This column](#) is only one example. Higher gas prices and consumer debt aren't helping matters.

Ironically, an inert federal government might just be the thing the economy needs to begin recovering and reducing the unemployment rate. If the current impasse over raising the debt ceiling leads to a compromise that actually cuts federal spending, it might inject a sense of confidence in the economy.

As [this piece](#) from the Cato Institute argues, Washington's efforts to prop up the housing industry ended up just prolonging the fall in prices that has now taken hold. That's typical of the effect of all government efforts to stimulate the economy with tax money.

If gridlock forces government to get out of the way, Obama might win in spite of himself.