



## Republicans Starve The Poor While Handing \$20 Billion to Corporate Welfare Bums

By: RmuseSep. 24th, 2013

Republicans hate the idea of helping Americans struggling to survive in an economy they persist in sabotaging, and their reasoning is based on lies that America is broke or that aid to the poor creates a nation of takers. President Obama has proposed raising the minimum wage and offered Congress several job programs that would lift the poor out of poverty and reduce the number of Americans in need of assistance, but Republicans claim it is unfair to take taxpayer dollars to fund programs that would reduce the necessity for assistance to the least fortunate among us. However, Republicans do not think it is unfair to take taxpayer dollars to give to their wealthy benefactors or pass legislation to hand more of Americans' hard-earned money to those who need it least.

Last week, House Republicans voted to slash \$40 billion from the SNAP program (food stamps) over the next ten years because, they claim, America is too broke to help seniors, working families, and children eat, but they preserved agriculture subsidies in the farm bill because America is not too broke to give welfare to corporate agriculture or GOP House members voting to cut food stamps. In fact, according to Republicans America is never too broke to give tens-of-billions of taxpayers' dollars annually to three specific industries that are raking in record profits, and if they were brought to an end America could afford to help the poor, repair the crumbling infrastructure, and put the economy on a sound footing. Republican's abhorrence of helping the poor or growing the economy aside, it is their adherence to wasteful subsidies that benefit no-one but corporations that sets them apart as fiscal morons.

Subsidies are a form of financial support extended to an economic sector (institution, business, or individual) with the aim of promoting beneficial economic outcomes for the subsidy recipients. Americans are likely unaware how much of their hard-earned tax dollars Republicans give to institutions and businesses that are reporting record profits, and all the while Republicans claim America cannot afford to assist hungry Americans, repair crumbling roads and bridges, or fund education. According to the [Cato Institute](#), American families are paying an average of \$6,000 per year to corporations that have doubled their profits while cutting 2.9 million American jobs. It works out to approximately \$100 billion a year in corporate welfare, and that does not include some of the biggest and most wasteful subsidies in the nation. It is no small coincidence that the industries receiving the most taxpayer-funded welfare are also Republicans' favorite donors in the oil, banking, pharmaceutical, and agricultural industries, which are why they bristle at the suggestion the subsidies must end.

One of the worst uses of taxpayer dollars are fossil fuel subsidies that experts estimate are anywhere from [\\$10 billion](#) to [\\$41 billion](#) annually according to the [International Monetary Fund](#). This year marked the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of America's gifts to the oil industry, and congressional Republicans have refused

to consider eliminating big oil's free money because they receive a disproportionate amount of oil and gas industry campaign contributions. To add insult to injury, the five largest oil companies raked in \$118 billion in profits while Americans paid record-high gas prices. Two years ago the CEO of one of the largest oil companies issued a statement [saying](#) it was "*un-American*" to end subsidies to the 5 biggest oil companies, and a Republican Senator, Pat Roberts (KS) defended the statement and told Senator Chuck Schumer that "*I'd call that un-American.*" What is un-American is handing out about the same amount of taxpayer dollars to the oil industry in a couple of years that House Republicans just cut from food stamps for ten years, but keeping oil industry profits soaring at the expense of hungry children, seniors, and working poor families is what keeps Republican campaign coffers full.

The subsidy that is an affront to common decency and millions of hungry Americans on pace to lose \$40 billion over ten years in food assistance is those going to the agriculture industry. According to [The Environmental Working Group](#) the federal government presently pays about \$20 billion in cash annually to farmers and farmland owners that primarily benefit corporate agriculture as well as several of the House Republicans who voted for cuts to the food stamp program. Like oil industry subsidies, two years' worth of farm subsidies would replace the \$40 billion in food stamp cuts, but then ending farm subsidies would end farmer's incentive to overproduce to push down prices and create political demands for more subsidies. The conservative Cato Institute said that subsidies "*hinder farmers from innovating, cutting costs, diversifying their land use, and taking the actions needed to prosper in a competitive global economy.*" However, the agriculture industry is already prospering to the tune of \$122.2 billion in 2012 that is up 3.7% in 2011 according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, so farmers really have no incentive to innovate, cut costs, and diversify their land.

Despite the insanity of taking taxpayer dollars and handing them to the oil and agriculture industry, at least those industries produce something consumers can purchase and use. One of the largest, and most offensive, subsidies taxpayers fund is the \$71 billion going to religious organizations and churches. The [\\$71 billion](#) is over and above the \$1.2 billion in the clergy's tax exemption for their parsonage allowance, capital gains tax exemption, and an exemption for donations and grants. For the record, the \$71 billion figure is just what taxpayers are expected to pay for lost property taxes churches avoid paying.

If Americans are not bothered that every taxpayer is paying the government to subsidize religion, they should be outraged that the practice is blatantly unconstitutional. It is always risky to utter that churches should lose the tax-exempt status, but religion is a business and churches, like the oil, agriculture, and banking industries get tax breaks they do not deserve and this nation 's people would benefit if they paid their fair share and quit mooching off hardworking taxpayers. Where churches are not like big oil and agriculture is that just one year of their \$71 billion taxpayer gifts would replace the ten-year \$40 billion food stamp cuts and still have \$31 billion left in the first year to repay Americans for picking up the tab for firefighters, law enforcement, roads, and public schools churches benefit from every day.

Republicans cannot say that America is too broke to feed hungry children, senior citizens, and disabled Americans any more than the country cannot afford to repair and rebuild the crumbling infrastructure. Last year President Obama begged Congress to put up \$50 billion for infrastructure improvements and

job creation, and Republicans dismissed his request out of hand as being too exorbitant for a nation that is broke. The nation is not too broke to give corporate welfare worth tens-of-billions of dollars each year to banks, oil companies, pharmaceutical companies, and religious enterprises because they are loyal Republican contributors.

Republicans are wont to say helping Americans in need creates a nation of people dependent on government, but for generations this government has created industries that are not only dependent on government for free money, they are outraged at the suggestion that reaping record profits is reason to stop their taxpayer-funded welfare payments. It is time for Republicans to be honest with the American people and tell them the truth that they can afford to create jobs, feed the poor, and grow the economy, but that they would rather spend taxpayer dollars on their campaign contributors.