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Democrats embrace billions in new corporate welfare

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President Joe Biden deserves credit for reaching across the aisle and helping move a bipartisan infrastructure bill that will draw significant Republican support. The compromise legislation appears to be on the path to Senate approval and will then head to the House, where it faces opposition from liberals who believe that \$1.2 trillion in spending is too timid.

Like any deal, it has its good and bad points. To the extent that the GOP succeeded in emphasizing public works projects such as highways, airports, bridges and the like, it can be considered a reasonable step forward and an example of how cooperation is possible even during hyperpartisan times.

The guts of the final legislation — which runs to 2,700 pages and includes \$550 billion in new spending over five years — remain unknown. But enough details have emerged to confirm that, contrary to their political rhetoric, progressives and Democrats are actually huge fans of corporate welfare — particularly when it's lavished on purportedly “green” endeavors.

As The Wall Street Journal pointed out this week, conglomerates such as Exxon Mobil, United Airlines and Toyota are angling to get a crack at billions in taxpayer money available under the bill by dabbling in various clean energy projects that include hydrogen-powered trucks, air taxis and carbon capture technologies. The infrastructure compromise includes millions for expanding the electric vehicle charging network — How did we survive all this time without government-owned gasoline stations? — and auto companies promise to ramp up their EV production as long as Congress keeps bribing wealthy Americans with tax credits and handouts to purchase expensive plug-ins.

Democrats also succeeded in adding billions devoted to rural broadband development that has, to this point, been competently handled by the private sector. No doubt some of that cash will make its way into the hands of major tech companies. Utilities will get billions in new federal handouts to expand transmission grids. And if you liked the Solyndra fiasco, you'll love the idea of the multibillion-dollar slush fund the legislation creates for the Energy Department to dole out cash to favored green energy companies.

The legislation will serve as beacon to attract other newcomers to the federal trough. “Other industries that provide private-sector infrastructure are now going to start lobbying Washington for their own subsidies,” Chris Edwards of the Cato Institute told the podcast “The World and Everything In It.”

America's traditional infrastructure has real needs, and this compromise will provide relief. The pork and subsidies are an inevitable byproduct of the political process and should be kept to a minimum. But can we once and for all put a stake through the fallacy about Democrats being warriors in opposition to corporate welfare?