

7 Misleading Things Obama Has Said In The Past 33 Days (VIDEO)

Hunter Stuart, June 26

Now that Obama's campaign for reelection is in full swing, the president hasn't been shy about touting his own record or about attacking that of his rival, presumptive Republican nominee Mitt Romney. Over the past few months, we've been keeping track of statements made by Obama and his campaign that sounded a little fishy. We did some fact-checking on 7 misleading things the president has said since May 24:

#7. "If congress doesn't act by the end of the month of June ... interest rates on federal student loans will double overnight. That means the average student with those loans will rack up an additional \$1,000 dollars in debt." -- from a [speech](#) by Obama on student loans at the University of Nevada Las Vegas (June, 7 2012)

To fact-check this claim, HuffPost reached out to Amy Laitinen, a higher education analyst who used to work in the Department of Education under the Obama administration. Laitinen explained that Obama is referring to a [law passed in 2007 that reduced interest rates](#) on federally-subsidized [Stafford loans](#). The law is set to expire this summer, causing interest rates to double from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent.

Although that's a big increase, only new loans would be affected, which means existing loans would keep their current low rates. Moreover, Laitinen said Stafford loans only account for about one-third of new loans. So, while the situation is not ideal for college students, it's not nearly as dire as Obama made it seem.

#6. "When Mitt Romney was governor, Massachusetts was No. 1 in state debt. \$18 billion in debt. More debt per person than any other state in the country." -- from an [attack ad](#) titled "Number One" that was posted June 12, 2012 on the Obama campaign's [official YouTube page](#)

While this statement is factually accurate, it leaves out a big part of the picture.

Massachusetts owed a notoriously large state debt for a long time, certainly before Romney ever set foot in the governor's office. Part of the reason the Bay State's debt is so high, [as PolitiFact points out](#), is because many projects that in other states would be funded by counties are funded by the state in Massachusetts.

Secondly, as anyone who's ever lived in Massachusetts will tell you, "the Big Dig" -- a highway and tunnel construction project that was started in the 1980s and has cost over \$20 billion -- has been a budgetary nightmare for decades. The *Boston Globe* estimates the project [won't be paid off until 2038 at the earliest](#). No matter who's governor of Massachusetts, the Big Dig is still an incredibly expensive project, with the interest alone costing the state billions.

Finally (in contrast to the narrative given in the Obama ad) an [article in the National Review](#) shows that [Massachusetts was badly bruised by a recent recession](#) before Romney entered office. Romney proceeded

to make cuts in nearly every area of state government in an attempt to reduce spending, added a huge amount of cash to the state's "rainy day" stabilization fund, and convinced ratings agencies to upgrade the state's credit rating as a result.

This isn't to say Romney whipped the Massachusetts economy into shape, but implying that he was responsible for the state's massive debt misrepresents the truth.

#5. "Our oil production is higher than it's been in the last eight years, and imports of foreign oil have actually dropped." -- Obama at a [campaign fundraiser](#) at the Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago, Ill. (June 1, 2012)

While it's true that domestic crude oil production is [higher than it's been any year since 2003](#), and it's also true that oil imports are [lower than they've been since 1999](#), Obama can't take credit for either.

A [report from the US Energy Information Administration](#) shows that imports of crude oil and petroleum started to fall in 2005 -- long before Obama entered the Oval Office. Add to that the fact that [many experts](#) (even [the CEO of Exxon Mobil](#)) think that U.S. demand for oil has already peaked and will only decline in the future -- as a result of many factors, among them demographic change, greater use of alternative energy and better fuel efficiency. And though it's true that Obama has increased fuel-efficiency standards, as *The New York Times* points out, [his changes didn't take effect until this year](#).

Lastly -- and this is easily seen in the data from the EIA -- the Great Recession further reduced already-declining U.S. demand for oil, as families and companies cut back on expenses.

#4. "Instead of hiring workers from his own state, Romney outsourced jobs to India." -from [two separate attack ads](#) paid for by the Obama campaign, both released earlier this month.

Both of Obama's ads quote an article from the *Boston Globe* that cites a lucrative contract Romney signed with Citigroup in 2004 for an electronic food stamp program that had a customer service call center in India. What the ads don't say is how much money Romney saved Massachusetts taxpayers by allowing the call center to be outsourced --[potentially as much as \\$640,000 a year](#). (The same Obama campaign ad criticizes Romney for how much he spent while serving as governor of the Bay State.)

Further, when Romney was presented with a budget provision that would have prohibited Massachusetts from doing business with companies that outsourced jobs to foreign countries, both the *Boston Globe* and the *Boston Herald* urged the governor to veto that provision. He did.

Lastly, as the [Washington Post](#) points out, most of the call center jobs ended up in Utah, so that by Romney's last year in office there were only 18 jobs affiliated with the program that remained in India.

#3. "[Under Romney] Massachusetts plunged to 47th in job creation." -- David Axelrod, Obama campaign senior advisor, [on CBS's 'Face The Nation'](#), June 3, 2012

Romney's been pummeled with this statistic, first during the Republican primaries and now by the Obama campaign (see [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)). Factually, it's accurate to say that Massachusetts was 47th out of 50 states for job growth from December 2002 through December 2006 -- PolitiFact [verified the statement using Bureau of Labor Statistics](#). But there are different ways of looking at the numbers, and, as noted above, Romney inherited a state that was already in deep economic trouble.

While the rate of job growth in Massachusetts was lower than the rate for the country as a whole during that time, the number of jobs in the state *did* increase under Romney's tenure.

The poor state of the Massachusetts economy at the time was a major concern in the [gubernatorial debates between Romney and his opponent, Shannon O'Brien](#). The Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that Massachusetts had the [second-worst increase in unemployment the year before Romney took office](#). In fact, it placed at No. 50, so saying it "plunged" to No. 47 in job creation is a little misleading. The data also show that [unemployment in Massachusetts bottomed-out a few months after Romney was sworn in](#), and employment began a slow climb upwards from that point until the Great Recession of 2008-2009.

#2. "Our businesses have created almost 4.3 million new jobs over the last 27 months." -- Obama during a [presidential address](#) in Golden Valley, Minn. (June 2, 2012)

Obama has made this claim many times recently (see [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#), and see Sarah Jessica Parker say it [here](#)), but again, he isn't giving the whole picture. We called Josh Bivens, an analyst at the Economic Policy Institute, to see what the missing context was. Bivens told us that Obama neglected to mention the 500,000 jobs that were lost in the public sector over the same time period.

Obama also started counting from a low point when the private sector job numbers bottomed out -- a more useful statistic would be the number of jobs created in the past two years, or perhaps since he took office. And don't forget, as *The New York Times* points out, [the country still needs to add more jobs to reach the level of employment when Obama was elected](#).

#1. "[Under my administration] government spending has risen at a slower rate than under any administration since Dwight Eisenhower." -- Obama at a [campaign fundraiser](#) at the Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago, Ill. (June 1, 2012)

Obama has [made this statement a few times](#), citing an [article by an economic reporter at MarketWatch](#) that claimed his alleged "spending binge" never actually happened. However, since its publication, there have been a lot of questions raised about the math the article used to reach this conclusion.

The *Washington Post* [points out](#), for example, that MarketWatch's analysis didn't take into account most of Obama's spending in 2009. (MarketWatch's reason was that the 2009 budget was written by the Bush administration.) This significantly lowers the amount of spending attributed to Obama, especially since 2009 was the year of the \$787 billion stimulus package. In reality, four months of 2009 fell under Bush and eight fell under Obama. (MarketWatch admits that Obama was responsible for some spending in 2009, but assigns him only \$140 billion for the whole year.)

The *Post* goes on to show that viewing federal spending relative to the size of the U.S. economy, then under Obama spending "has hit highs not seen since the end of World War II."

[Forbes](#) and the Cato Institute offer further critiques. *Forbes*'s study took several important factors into account when comparing Obama's spending rate to those of previous presidents: It adjusted for inflation, removed interest payments from the equation (on the theory that a president shouldn't be responsible for the national debt he inherits upon taking office), and subtracted the TARP bailout from its calculations (on the assumptions that under any president, the government would have bailed out the banks, and the TARP loans were mostly made under Bush and paid back under Obama, where they counted as negative spending).

After those three subtractions, the *Forbes* report found Obama placed *second-highest* in federal spending -- second only to Richard Nixon.

It should also be noted that Obama wanted to spend much more than he was allowed to, but Congress prevented him from doing so. Still, Obama has increased the national debt by almost 50 percent to date.

Did we miss a misleading comment Obama has made recently? Send an email or a tweet to hunter@huffingtonpost.com or [@hoont](https://twitter.com/hoont)