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Hey, House GOP: We Need to (Re)Build Bridges, Not Burn Them

By: Amy Dean – March 21, 2013

It's way past time to invest in our nation's infrastructure. The obstructionists in the GOP need to get out of the way on this if they cannot propose an alternative. Rather than listening to the more moderate voices of their own party in the Senate who have gone on record as supporting investment in infrastructure, the hardliners are prepared to spend nary a penny to rebuild America.

They are even losing touch with those in the think tanks and media institutions who are normally Republican allies: Jim Harper of the libertarian Cato Institute, for instance, told CNN in 2011 that he would support improvements to broadband Internet infrastructure in order to make the U.S. more competitive on the world stage.

"If you're able to access information more quickly, then that increases productivity -- especially in an economy like ours which is increasingly a knowledge-based economy," Harper said.

And it's not just broadband Internet that our economy needs in order to begin to function properly again. People still need to get to their jobs, goods still need to be shipped, and construction firms still need to make money -- all of which requires modern, well-planned systems for transportation and energy.

The *Wall Street Journal* interviewed financier Chris Lee of Highstar Capital back in January 2012; Lee proposed establishing an infrastructure bank that would start with government backing and help to fast-track big projects that would modernize our country's infrastructure. Obama took that idea and incorporated it into his current "Fix It First" plan for a public-private partnership to invest in our infrastructure. Interestingly, it looks as though the White House will not be seeking Congressional approval before starting work.

So if the *Wall Street Journal* and the Cato Institute can recognize that infrastructure needs money in order to modernize and make our nation competitive with countries like South Korea and China, then what could possibly derail Obama's infrastructure spending package if it were to go before Congress?

The House GOP could derail it.

As *Washington Post* blogger Neil Irwin put it, "facts [about our infrastructure needs] have crashed headlong into a widespread view in the Republican caucus that any federal spending is wasteful." House Republicans who hold that view and act on it are acting against the best interests of all Americans, and they should be ashamed.

People in Washington, D.C. often talk about bipartisanship, but lately it seems like real cooperation is nowhere to be found. Here we have an investment that would repair the beating heart of America -- its roads, airports, bridges, transit systems and energy grid -- and House Republicans would rather skip it and go golfing with their funders. The

president is wise to let them go, and to make deals with the savvier business leaders and conservative thinkers who are willing to invest to save our infrastructure from sinking even further into decay.