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Should Obama Reimburse Taxpayers? Should Boehner and Republicans?

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I don't often agree with House Speaker John Boehner.

He voted *for* the No Child Left Behind Act, and even maintained that it was his "proudest achievement" in his 20 years in Congress. He voted *for* the Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit (Bushcare), the greatest expansion of the welfare state since Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, and the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 (the Bush bailout). He voted *for* the Patriot Act and its various extensions.

He voted *against* capping U.S. contributions to the United Nations, *against* a bill to loosen government control over churches, *against* a federal mandate requiring localities to provide foreign-language ballots, *against* stopping spending to carry out an executive order requiring federal contractors to provide translators, and *against* an across the board spending cut for every program funded by the Treasury Department.

But **Boehner** has rightly criticized President Obama's travel to swing states for what the White House calls official presidential business, and has called on the Obama campaign to reimburse the taxpayers.

According to Boehner, Obama's campaigning on the taxpayers' dime "does not pass the straight face test." A look at almost all of the President's predecessors

shows that “they find official business to do along with their campaigning.”

Too bad Boehner didn’t criticize President Bush for doing the same thing. And too bad Boehner didn’t criticize Bush for starting two senseless wars and doubling the national debt.

But Boehner is not alone.

The Republican National Committee (RNC) has filed a formal complaint with the Government Accountability Office (GAO) accusing the Obama reelection campaign (Obama for America) of misusing tax dollars for the President’s reelection.

According to RNC Chairman Reince Priebus: “Obama for America has been cheating the American taxpayer by using taxpayer dollars to fund their general election efforts.” The President “should refund the taxpayers for the cost of these trips through his campaign account Obama for America.”

The criticism of Obama was levied after he took official presidential visits to the campuses of the University of North Carolina, the University of Colorado, and the University of Iowa — all located in key swing states in the 2012 presidential race.

But Boehner is right. President Obama should reimburse the taxpayers. In fact, Boehner and the Republicans should reimburse the taxpayers as well. They should reimburse the taxpayers for the trillions of dollars taken from them to fund things the government is not authorized by the Constitution to do in the first place.

The taxpayers should be reimbursed for all their money spent by the Department of Education. Although major federal spending on K-12 education began in 1965 with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), it has exploded since the Department of Education was instituted in 1980. But not only should the Department of Education be eliminated because the federal government has been given no authority whatsoever by the Constitution to have anything to do with education, there should be no No Child Left Behind Act, no Race to the Top fund, no National School Lunch Program, no Head Start, and no Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Even worse is the fact that less than 10 percent of the funding of local K-12 public schools comes from the federal government. This means that most of the budget of the Department of Education is for the political appointees in Washington D.C., the 3,600 bureaucrats in the nation’s capital and five other locations, and the 1,400 bureaucrats who work in the 10 regional offices.

The taxpayers should be reimbursed for all the money spent on foreign aid. Since World War II, the U.S. government has dispensed hundreds of billions of dollars in foreign aid in a variety of forms to over 150 countries. Since their peace

accord in 1979, Egypt and Israel have been the top two recipients of U.S. foreign aid. The two countries together account for about one-third of all foreign aid spending, the majority of which pays for armaments. Foreign aid is really just foreign government aid. There is no telling what percentage of foreign aid actually makes it into the pockets of people in real need instead of lining the pockets of corrupt foreign regimes and their privileged contractors. The real problem, of course, is that foreign aid is nothing more than the forced looting of American taxpayers. Any American is free to donate any amount of money to any foreign country he wishes as long as it is out of his own bank account and not the public treasury.

The taxpayers should be reimbursed for the cost of senseless foreign wars. Over a trillion dollars has already been appropriated for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The total price tag will be double or triple that amount. But those are just two wars in the 21st century. The history of the 20th century is the history of U.S. military intervention in country after country after country, including undeclared major wars in Korea and Vietnam.

The taxpayers should be reimbursed for having to maintain an empire of troops and bases around the globe. When I **recently wrote** about this subject, I reported that the United States had troops in 148 countries and 11 territories, including over 50,000 in Germany, 39,000 in Japan, and 10,000 in Italy — 67 years after World War II came to an end. I also noted that, according to the Department of Defense's Base Structure Report, the DOD "manages a global real property portfolio consisting of more than 542,000 facilities (buildings, structures, and linear structures) located on nearly 5,000 sites worldwide covering more than 28 million acres." Nothing has changed except the total cost of maintaining this empire.

The taxpayers should be reimbursed for the trillions of dollars confiscated from them and redistributed to other Americans in the form of Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), energy assistance, housing assistance, Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), unemployment benefits, food stamps, and refundable tax credits.

The taxpayers should be reimbursed for the billions wasted on the war on drugs. According to a Cato Institute "White Paper" entitled *The Budgetary Impact of Ending Drug Prohibition*, the drug war costs American taxpayers \$41.3 billion per year. The federal Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) has 10,000 employees in 226 offices in 21 divisions throughout the United States in addition to 83 foreign offices in 63 countries around the world. The DEA employs 300 chemists and 124 pilots. And then there are the DEA's in the 50 states. The cost of the drug war far outweighs any of its supposed benefits.

U.S. taxpayers deserve a refund for all the money taken from them and

redistributed to other Americans, used to maintain an empire, used to build a police state, or wasted on federal pork. President Obama's campaign trips on the taxpayers' dime is just that — a dime compared to the trillions of dollars squandered by both parties since the institution of the income tax. Without the income tax there would have been no money to fight foreign wars, build an empire, institute the New Deal and the Great Society, and establish a police state.

John Boehner is right: It is time to reimburse the taxpayers. But he is overlooking the vast sum that is really owed American taxpayers thanks in a great measure to his own party. The focus by Republicans on Obama's petty offenses diverts attention from the genuinely criminal acts of the U.S. government.