



Published on NewsBusters.org (<http://newsbusters.org>)

Obama Requests \$50 Billion More, Networks Devote 38 Times More Coverage to World Cup

By Julia A. Seymour

Created 06/17/2010 - 10:21

The news media have recently been struck with World Cup fever, with two broadcast networks sending reporters to South Africa to cover the games. At the same time, a bailout request that could cost taxpayers another \$50 billion was ignored by most broadcast news programs.

ABC, CBS and NBC spent a combined 25 minutes 54 seconds talking about World Cup soccer between June 13 and 15. That was more than 38 times what they spend talking about Obama's latest call for further government spending - which was guaranteed to upset taxpayers.

While the World Cup is a worthwhile story, U.S. taxpayers might have ranked a request for \$50 billion more of their dollars higher than the networks did.

Obama sent a [letter \[1\]](#) to Congressional leaders on both sides of the aisle June 12, urging them to pass a "derailed" \$50 billion state bailout bill. But the three broadcast networks' newcasts have all but ignored it. "Good Morning America" was the only network newscast to mention the president's push for more stimulus. Its story was 40 seconds long.

By ignoring the request for more funds, the networks shielded Obama from the taxpayer anger and criticism that has been simmering all over the country, bubbling up at hundreds of tea party protests around the country and at town halls in 2009.

He says he wants the \$50 billion to avert "massive layoffs" of public-sector employees like policemen, firefighters and teachers.

"But don't call it stimulus," warned CNN's Kiran Chetry. Stimulus is a dirty word these days, a point CNN acknowledged when it reported the president's call to Congress.

Unlike the networks, many print news outlets including The New York Times, The Washington Post, Reuters, and The Christian Science Monitor, along with cable networks CNN, CNBC and MSNBC reported Obama's appeal for funds which he claimed was necessary to prevent a setback in the "economic recovery."

"In the letter Saturday, Obama made an unequivocal case for spending more now - particularly on measures to support small business and state governments - to ensure that the recovery doesn't 'slide backwards.' The Post wrote on June 15. "And administration officials defended their lobbying campaign, noting that White House Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Christina Romer [2] met with two key groups of House Democrats in recent weeks to make the case for delaying major deficit-reduction until growth is firmly reestablished."

No reporting means no criticism

By devoting a mere 40 seconds to the stimulus request on just one show, the broadcast networks didn't leave much room for critics of the plan. Those critics argue that the initial stimulus bill has failed since the unemployment rate has risen to 9.7 percent, and throwing more money at the problem won't be the solution.

One such critic is Rep. Michele Bachmann, R-Minn., who offered her perspective of more stimulus in a column for Townhall.com.

Bachmann pointed out [3], "Back in 2009 when President Obama was touting his \$787 billion economic 'stimulus' plan, he claimed that we passed the bill so that *'local districts didn't have to lay off teachers, firefighters, police officers and others, and the stimulus succeeded in that.'* (Fox News - 7/5/2009 [4])"

According to Bachmann, the "throw money at it" approach "doesn't work" and "we don't have the money to spend in the first place." She reminded readers of the \$13 trillion federal debt that is projected to hit \$19.6 trillion by 2015. The unemployment rate is also at a very high 9.7 percent (it went as high as 10 percent under Obama).

CATO Institute Budget Analyst Tad DeHaven criticized Obama's latest request as a union bailout and said, "the only thing the money would sustain is the excessive wages and benefits government employees enjoy at the expense of the private sector."

DeHaven pointed out that state and local government employees earn 45 percent more [5] (total compensation) by the hour than average private-sector employees.

History of Support for Government Stimulus

The networks' near silence about the latest in a long parade of bailouts shouldn't really be surprising. ABC, CBS and NBC helped sell the initial stimulus package and other bailouts for the White House.

Obama not only had strong majorities in the House and Senate to promote his massive stimulus bill, he had ABC, NBC and CBS cheering his "bold" push for economic stimulus. A Business & Media Institute Special Report [6] found that ABC and NBC particularly favored the legislation, including pro-stimulus voices by a more-than 2-to-1 ratio (139-56).

After all, as NBC's Scott Cohn told viewers, "Economic stimulus isn't just a political debate around here. It could be a matter of survival."

But as federal spending grew in unpopularity, the networks have barely reported such bailout requests.

After all, the public uproar over a \$787 billion stimulus, auto bailouts, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac's growing burden [7] on taxpayers (possibly up to \$1 trillion [8]) has revealed itself in cities across the country as thousands have protested against out of control government spending.

The networks have refused to hold Obama accountable for the failure of his stimulus package even after a year with the most jobs lost since 1940 [9] (as of January 2010). Since then the national unemployment rate has dropped a smidgen to 9.7 percent. But millions are still out of work.

Obama's administration sold the stimulus package on claims that, if passed, the unemployment rate wouldn't go above 8 percent. During the campaign he also promised to "save or create" 3-4 million jobs. Now, Obama says the economy is in recovery, but \$50 billion more is needed to help desperate state and local governments.

In October 2009, the networks also helped the president by staying quiet about a "stealth" push for "second stimulus," knowing that the public outcry would be fierce. The networks covered the first stimulus package 6 times as much [10] as the possibility of a second stimulus.

Even a full year after the stimulus bill passed, nearly half of network reports failed to include any criticism [11].

Like this article? Sign up [12] for "The Balance Sheet," BMI's weekly e-mail newsletter.

Source URL:

<http://newsbusters.org/blogs/julia-seymour/2010/06/17/obama-requests-50-billion-more-networks-devote-38-times-more-coverage>

Links:

- [1] http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/president_letter_6-12-10.pdf
- [2] http://www.whorunsgov.com/Profiles/Christina_Romer
- [3] <http://townhall.com/blog/g/67A0561A-A9F0-456D-B514-EC2916017DEB>
- [4] <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2009/07/05/hoyer-stimulus-slow-create-jobs-time-ripe-new-package/>
- [5] <http://www.cato-at-liberty.org/2010/06/14/another-government-employee-bailout/>
- [6] <http://www.businessandmedia.org/specialreports/2009/Spending/spending-execsum.asp>
- [7] <http://www.businessandmedia.org/articles/2010/20100303134308.aspx>
- [8] <http://www.businessandmedia.org/articles/2010/20100614151842.aspx>
- [9] <http://www.businessandmedia.org/articles/2010/20100113150210.aspx>
- [10] <http://www.businessandmedia.org/articles/2009/20091021144508.aspx>
- [11] <http://www.businessandmedia.org/articles/2010/20100210132123.aspx>
- [12] <http://www.businessandmedia.org/articles/email/email.asp>