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Biden Claims Stimulus Spending Has Created 150,000 Jobs, But That Isn't Backed Up by His Own Report

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By Matt Cover

(CNSNews.com) – Vice President Joe Biden last week claimed that the federal stimulus spending program has created or saved 150,000 jobs since February, when President Barack Obama signed the stimulus bill into law.

“In the first 77 days of the two-year Recovery Act program, 150,000 jobs have been created or saved,” Biden said in a press release accompanying the report.

However, the basis for his claim is elusive at best.

The progress report on the stimulus plan released last week by the vice president's office contained no such figure, nor did it reference any other document that might corroborate Biden's claim.

“The Quarterly Report to the President on Progress Implementing the Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009” did mention another, mandatory report that won't be released until October 2009. It adds that the vice president's office is instituting an “unprecedented” level of transparency.

“We are starting to implement an unprecedented level of transparency. I am pleased that already--so shortly after enactment--visitors to Recovery.gov can easily access extensive information about their tax dollars at work,” the Web site quoted Biden as saying.

Recovery.org does not contain information about how many jobs those tax dollars are creating, however.

A spokesman in the vice president's office told CNSNews.com that the job numbers were taken from a report published May 11 by the President's Council of Economic Advisors (CEA). However, that report -- titled "Estimates of Job Creation from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009" -- doesn't contain the 150,000 jobs figure either.

In fact, it explains that job creation numbers for the Recovery Act's first quarter will not be out until August. “The first report is due in August 2009 and will cover the full first quarter under the Act,” the report states.

Biden, meanwhile, also claimed that the stimulus bill has led to the creation of “over 3,000 transportation construction projects” in 52 states and territories -- another number missing from both his and CEA's report.

The only mention of transportation projects comes from anecdotal accounts of local transportation projects funded with stimulus money. These "reports from the field" are taken from local press accounts and summarized in the vice president's stimulus report to show state-by-state examples of the stimulus in action.

So where did the numbers come from?

Tad DeHaven, a budget analyst with the libertarian Cato Institute, told CNSNews.com that the numbers were derived from a formula that would tell the administration “whatever it wanted to hear.”

“Where do you even start with this nonsense?” DeHaven asked. “This is just a political number, but I’ll leave it to him (Biden) to proclaim it a gospel truth.”

DeHaven added: “They try to make this look scientific and it’s not. It’s just politics. There’s not a lot of science to it, although they dress it up that way.”

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