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## Obama Kicks Taxpayers in the Teeth

by **Brian Darling** (more by this author)

Posted 04/27/2009 ET

Last week, President Barack Obama asked his cabinet to find \$100 million in budget cuts -- to ensure that “every taxpayer dollar is being spent wisely.” Dan Mitchell of the Cato Institute called the cuts a stunt and “a kick in the teeth for taxpayers.” If he’s really looking for unwise spending, the president should take a hard look at his so-called stimulus plan.

Start with your plan to spend \$500,000 on defraying the feed costs for Missouri fish farmers. Then cut the \$1.5 million to improve the parking garages and roads surrounding the Greektown Casino development in Detroit. Cut \$3.1 million in funds to New York to upgrade the “Canal Boat Museum.” These cuts, identified by House Republican Whip Eric Cantor (R-Va.), are a good place to start and get you \$5.1 million in quick savings.

The stimulus plan also included \$50 million for the National Endowment for the Arts for ... art stimulus, apparently. Last year, the NEA gave \$150,000 to the New York Museum of Arts & Design for “Change the World! Radicals and Revolutionaries in American Craft, 1945-1970.” Mr. President, cutting \$50 million in frivolous spending by the NEA and a handful of wasteful projects nets you \$55.1 million in savings. Cut half the \$160 million earmarked for “paid volunteers” at the Corporation for National and Community Service, and you have more than \$100 million in cuts and volunteers who are willing to work for free.

Assuming that stimulus funds are spread out evenly over the next two years, it will take a two-hour and 14-minute spending freeze to find \$100 million in savings. And these are only a few of the many projects that could be slashed.

## **Bush-Bashing Commission**

Last week, President Obama set the table for highly partisan hearings on the Bush administration’s interrogation program for captured terrorists. Obama said that he

didn't want to "prejudge" potential prosecution of Bush officials who "formulated those legal decisions." But expect a congressional fishing expedition as the left tries to attack President Bush's legacy by calling witnesses and leaking documents to provide a one-sided view of the Bush Global War on Terror.

Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.) is salivating at the idea of hearings and told Congressional Quarterly he's pleased that Obama "has kept the proverbial door open to the possibility of prosecutions, where warranted, of those responsible for the torture policy under the Bush administration." Sen. John Cornyn told CQ that he opposes "retrospective attempts to punish people" and that such steps could "lead to excessive timidity and risk avoidance" by government officials.

## **Hate Crimes**

The House is now working on legislation to expand federal hate crime law. The bill would make a federal crime, punishable by 10 years in jail, if a person uses fire, a gun or a bomb for a crime motivated by gender or sexual preference. Also, the bill would impose a life sentence for the hate crimes involving kidnapping and murder.

Yet these offenses are already illegal under state laws, and it's hard to see what purpose would be served by federalizing them. Congress should resist the temptation to assume the police functions of the states. The federal government has no business trying to further encroach on the traditional functions of state and local governments.

## **Dude, Where's My Job?**

Earth Day turned to "Dude, Where's My Job Day" in the House Energy and Commerce Committee last week. Committee Chairman Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) sought to use Earth Day as a chance to promote its cap-and-tax energy bill. Waxman is in an untenable position, advocating for a bill that increases energy costs and causes dramatic job losses.

Recent polls suggest that the public opposes Waxman's agenda. A Rasmussen poll found that just one in every three voters now believe that human activity causes climate change. Moreover, Gallup found that a majority of Americans believe economic concerns should take priority over environmental concerns. Radical environmentalists seem to believe that the only way to save our planet from the "ravages of climate change" is to make Americans -- and the rest of the world -- poorer.

## Conservative Jeers

Conservative Jeers to Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner, who testified last week before the federal bailout oversight board and stated that “the decision on which banks will be allowed to repay TARP funds will depend on the needs of the broader economy.” Conservatives should be outraged that banks are trying to repay loans to the federal government, loaned by you, the taxpayer, and Secretary Geithner is refusing repayment.

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Brian Darling is director of U.S. Senate Relations at The Heritage Foundation.

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