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Obama forgets own campaign rhetoric

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The self-contradictions are catching up with the Obama administration. We will be transparent, they said. Only they aren't. We will be accountable. Anything but. You will find us nonpartisan and above politics as usual, they insisted. Hardly.

The job offer to keep Rep. Joe Sestak of Pennsylvania out of a Senate primary is instructive on this score.

While it may be more a mouse's squeak than a lion's roar as scandals go, the administration dodged questions about it for months and then finally put out a memo so vaguely worded as to arouse still more suspicion. That's a far cry from transparency, and about the only excuse for the approach to Sestak -- which seems pretty clearly illegal -- is that everyone does it and always has.

True enough and reason enough for Republicans to back off calls for a special prosecutor. But at least a few citizens may be trying to recall which of President Obama's c

ampaign speeches promised that his White House would get the job done when it came to tawdriness typical of D.C. politicians.

Something that is a lion's roar is the Gulf oil spill. Obama's idea of leadership has seemed mainly to consist of deflecting any thought that any of this was his fault.

The government go-ahead to drill was given on his watch in disregard of a federal law requiring still another permit assessing the threat to the environment. But Obama has mostly pointed to the regulating agency's questionable practices before he became president and

recently made an announcement about a criminal investigation of BP. That probe -- at this point, while efforts are still underway to stop the spill -- is politics meant to make him look tough while he sidesteps accountability.


In full partisan fervor that is seldom far from his lips, he has also attacked Republicans in general as opposing regulation, when, in fact, almost everyone recognizes the need for some regulations of particular kinds.

It is true that he did say in one of his rare full-scale press conferences that he would take responsibility for there being

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"insufficient urgency" in changing the "culture" of the government agency that regulates the drilling. Excuse me, but the way you change the culture is to require employees to henceforth do what the law requires them to do and set up a system of checks to make sure it is done. That can happen in, oh, one day.

By the way, for a glance at real leadership on the spill, look at Gov. Bobby Jindal of Louisiana. He did not just ask but practically demanded a slow-moving, seemingly recalcitrant federal government have BP build sand barriers to protect wetlands from oil slicks, and he won his way.

Another lion's roar was the health bill that was rushed through Congress with insufficient analysis and very few people knowing exactly what it would do. We're learning more everyday, as is noted in an article by Michael Tanner of the Cato Institute.

Citing such sources as the RAND Corp., the Office of the Chief Actuary and the Congressional Budget Office, he notes a number of recent findings. The law will hike health insurance premiums for young people. It could force as many as 10 million people to have to change their insurance. It will lead to \$311 billion more spending on

health care every 10 years. It may cause the closing of numerous hospitals. Middle-class taxpayers may end up paying \$1,000 more each year in taxes.

That's not the end of it, of course, because businesses are going to be hit, too, and are trying to figure out what the costs to them might be. Some have suggested that the uncertainties here -- along with the uncertainty of possibly getting a cap-and-trade tax and of not knowing what the government's accumulating debt might mean to the economy -- are slowing down business expansion and the rehiring of people even as the recession shows signs of lifting.

The public is increasingly disenchanted with President Obama these days, and here is what I'd suggest he do. Heed his campaign rhetoric.

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