



Written by [Ralph R. Reiland](#) on April 16, 2013

## The Economy: Baloney vs. Stark Reality

It was nearly three years ago, June 2010, that the Obama administration billed the coming season as “Recovery Summer.”

To pump up the administration’s hot-air balloon of optimism about an economic turnaround that supposedly was just around the corner, President Obama flew to Columbus, Ohio, to do a photo op with workers in hard hats and to celebrate the groundbreaking of a “shovel-ready,” stimulus-financed highway project.



Actually, the shovels were never “ready.” The president’s visit to Columbus came nearly a year and a half after the \$787 billion stimulus bill was signed into law.

“Stimulus-financed construction is set to explode this summer: 10,700 highway projects should be under way next month, up from just 1,750 last July,” reported the *New York Times* on June 18, 2010. “States expect to weatherize 82,000 homes this summer — 27 times the number of homes that were weatherized last summer, when the program got off to a slow start. And there will be 2,828 clean-water projects under construction, a twentyfold increase over last year.”

I suppose it’s not all bad that people in 82,000 houses got their windows caulked for nothing during Recovery Summer. That’s better than if the government had spent the money on drones to spy on gun clubs.

The free caulking and duct tape program was funded by a \$5 billion supplemental appropriation in the stimulus bill for the Department of Energy’s Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP).

To qualify, WAP recipients had to have incomes at or below 200 percent of the government-established poverty line.

We’re now way past the 82,000 houses that were to be federally weatherized during the Recovery Summer of 2010. In September 2012, the Department of Energy celebrated the weatherization of the 1 millionth home.

Joining the celebration, the Center for American Progress (“Progressive Ideas for a Strong, Just and Free America”) said that those truckloads of complimentary Fiberglas, duct tape and caulking were “a key part of the strategy to jump-start the economy” plus “it helps avoid the most catastrophic consequences of climate change.”

If they spent \$5 billion to weatherize a million houses, that’s an average of \$5,000 per retrofitted residence, and federal reports show that people in another 37 million residences are income eligible to receive the federally supplied weatherization.

The Department of Energy stated that recipients of the weatherization program would save an average of \$1.10 a day on their energy bills, or enough to buy almost half of a super-sized sugary drink, except they’re becoming illegal.

Nearly three years since Recovery Summer, we’re \$16.8 trillion in the hole, the median household



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income is lower than in 2010, we're stuck in a jobs depression, one in six Americans is living in poverty, and millions of workers have gone missing from the workforce.

"The Labor Department reported that the U.S. labor force — everyone who has a job or is looking for one — shrank by 500,000 people in March," reported the *Washington Post* on April 6. "That brought the civilian labor force participation rate to 63.3 percent in March, its lowest level since May 1979."

Bottom line: There was no 2010 Recovery Summer and we're still going backward. GDP growth in the last quarter of 2012 was a near-nothing 0.4 percent, down from the anemic growth rates of 1.8 percent in 2011 and 2.2 percent in all of 2012.

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