



Government Website Claims Stimulus Successes in Nonexistent Districts

President Obama's stimulus package is reviving the economy and providing work for eager Americans all over the country. Don't believe it? Just ask the folks that live in Arizona's 15th Congressional District.

Recovery.gov, the website established by the President's administration to track stimulus success stories, crows proudly about the 30 jobs that have been created or saved in the 15th with an infusion of less than \$1 million in stimulus funds. Whether or not they supported the President in the recent election or whether they favored enactment of the stimulus package legislation overall, the citizens of the 15th have to be grateful for the economic relief. Someone should interview one of the lucky ones with a new job.



Good luck with that. You see, the 15th Congressional District of Arizona doesn't exist. In fact, there are only eight congressional districts in the Grand Canyon State. Given the President's need to justify the scheme's existence and prop up his pet proposal with tales of signal achievements, one such exaggeration may be expected if not overlooked. The cheerful data published about the 15th District of Arizona's job creation was not unique, however.

ABC News has scoured the recovery.gov website for similar inaccuracies and whole cloth inventions and surprisingly has found numerous examples. Below are a few of the errors discovered by ABC News on the stimulus package-tracking site:

Fifteen jobs created and 19 million stimulus dollars spent in several congressional districts of Oklahoma that do not exist.

Thirty-nine jobs funded and \$10.6 million paid out to nonexistent Iowa districts.

Twenty-five jobs created in Connecticut's 42nd Congressional District. (Connecticut has five such districts.)

Over 400 jobs created and \$120 million claimed spent in the fictional congressional districts of American territories (inhabitants of territories are not represented in Congress).

When questioned about such sloppy reporting of stimulus successes, Ed Pound, Communications Director for the Recovery Board (the agency established by the stimulus package law to monitor and announce stimulus expenditures), tried passing the buck when he told ABC News, "We report what the recipients submit to us. Some recipients clearly don't know what congressional district they live in, so they appear to be just throwing in any number. We expected all along that recipients would make



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mistakes on their congressional districts, on jobs numbers, on award amounts, and so on. Human beings make mistakes,” Pound explained. Apparently, due diligence is not one thing the human beings that work at newly minted bureaucracies also do, however.

Congressmen charged with oversight of the stimulus disbursements are displeased by the Board’s subpar evaluation of declarations received from reported recipients. Rep. David Obey (D-Wis.) is the chairman of the House appropriations Committee and has released a statement calling for the correction of all figures reported on the stimulus-tracking site. “The inaccuracies on recovery.gov that have come to light are outrageous and the Administration owes itself, the Congress, and every American a commitment to work night and day to correct the ludicrous mistakes,” that statement reads.

It is probably too much to expect government agencies to be truthful, diligent, or accurate. Although, given the fact that the Recovery Board received an \$18 million grant from the feds as part of the stimulus bill, Americans should at least demand that it invest in a computer and use another website to double check the reports submitted to it. Perhaps it can find a good deal on laptops in Arizona’s 15th.



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