



Written by [Ralph R. Reiland](#) on July 27, 2012

## “You Didn’t Build That” and Income Redistribution

President Obama’s “you didn’t build that” comment has become a top campaign issue.

The uproar began when Obama, speaking on July 13 in Roanoke, Virginia, emphasized how an individual’s success in business is directly dependent upon the government’s spending on roads, bridges, education, etc. “If you were successful, somebody along the line gave you some help,” he proclaimed. “Somebody helped to create this unbelievable American system that we have that allowed you to thrive. Somebody invested in roads and bridges. If you’ve got a business, you didn’t build that. Somebody else made that happen.”



The Romney campaign responded by scheduling “We Did Build This” events in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Virginia, Wisconsin, Michigan, New Hampshire, Iowa, Missouri, North Carolina, Nevada, New Mexico, and Florida, featuring small business owners who wanted to respond to Obama’s perceived deprecation of entrepreneurship, individualism, and small business success.

Romney called Obama’s remark “extraordinarily revealing,” an unveiling of “an ideology that somehow says it’s the collective and government that we need to celebrate.”

The Obama campaign claims that the “If you’ve got a business, you didn’t build that” comment is being taken “out of context” and that Obama’s “didn’t build that” words were referring back to the “roads and bridges” in the prior sentence.

They’re maintaining that Obama just got the grammar wrong, misaligning a plural “roads and bridges” with a singular “that.” The campaign is arguing that it may have sounded like he was saying “you didn’t build that business” but what he was really saying was “you didn’t build that roads and bridges.”

Either way, President Obama now has a television ad playing that attempts to calm the uproar. “Of course Americans build their own businesses,” he states, looking directly into the camera. “Every day, hardworking people sacrifice to meet a payroll, create jobs, and make our economy run. And what I said was that we need to stand behind them, as America always has.”

Well, that’s not what he originally said, but it sounds good, sounds better than trying to stir up class resentments and votes by saying that freeloading bosses in America are riding around each day on the collective’s roads and bridges and not paying their “fair share.”

There’s no mention from the White House about how America’s top income groups contribute a disproportionate amount in taxes to pay for all the roads, bridges, tunnels, Senate salaries, White House parties, green bankruptcies, missiles and bombs. “The rich” are far from getting a “free ride.”

To further assist in calming things down, an NBC News clip is running that shows Mitt Romney opening the 2002 Winter Olympics. “We salute you Olympians, both because you dreamed and because you paid the price to make your dreams real,” he says. “You guys pushed yourself, drove yourself, sacrificed,



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trained and competed time and again at winning and losing.”

Romney then says the following, allegedly delivering the same message President Obama delivered in Roanoke: “You Olympians, however, know you didn’t get here solely on your own power. For most of you, loving parents, sisters or brothers, encouraged your hopes, coaches guided, communities built venues in order to organize competitions. All Olympians stand on the shoulders of those who lifted them. We’ve already cheered the Olympians — lets’ also cheer the parents, coaches and communities.”

There’s a difference, however, between what Romney and Obama said. Romney was saying nothing more than what is standard at graduation ceremonies — a public thanks to parents, spouses and teachers, a recognition that individual accomplishments are often helped along by others.

President Obama, instead, was arguing for more spreading around of the nation’s wealth, more income redistribution, more societal leveling.

Romney, in contrast, wasn’t trying to make a case for a redistribution of medals.

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