



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on March 6, 2013

Leaked E-mail Reveals White House Efforts to Make Sequestration Hurt

A [leaked e-mail](#) from the Agriculture Department has added substance to claims that President Obama's political strategy is to make the sequestration as painful as possible in order to win public opinion against the Republicans.

The sequester, which came about as part of the 2011 debt-ceiling deal, was originally supposed to total \$109 billion, but was delayed by lawmakers during fiscal cliff negotiations. The sequester — \$85 billion in spending cuts — does not affect Social Security or most other big entitlements, with a small exception for Medicare, which faces just minor cuts. It went into effect on March 1 despite various warnings from lawmakers and President Obama.



During the president's State of the Union address, he said of the impending sequestration, "These sudden, harsh, arbitrary cuts would certainly slow our recovery, and cost us hundreds of thousands of jobs."

But as March 1 came and went, it seemed that the hysteria over the sequestration was wholly unfounded.

Critics contend, however, that it is the goal of the Obama administration to make the sequestration as painful as possible so as to win favor with the American people and defeat Republicans in the arena of public opinion.

For example, the White House has not accepted the GOP's offer to give the president greater authority in making the cuts to help reduce the alleged impact that they would have on certain programs and agencies.

Political analysts believe the president intends to make the cuts hurt so that Republicans seeking reelection will ultimately agree to tax increases.

A statement by Gene Sperling, White House economic advisor, seems to imply that. "Our hope is, as more Republicans start to see this pain in their own districts, they will choose bipartisan compromise over this absolutist position," he commented.

The leaked e-mail from the Department of Agriculture now adds fuel to those suspicions.

Fox News reports,

The email, circulated around Capitol Hill, was sent Monday by Charles Brown, a director at the agency's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service [APHIS] office in Raleigh, N.C. He appears to tell his regional team about a response to his recent question on the amount of latitude he has in



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making cuts.

The response indicates that the APHIS would “eliminate assistance to producers in 24 states in managing wildlife damage to the aquaculture industry” without additional funds.

The partially redacted e-mail states, “However you manage that reduction, you need to make sure you are not contradicting what we said the impact would be.”

Arkansas Republican Rep. Tim Griffin asserted in a statement,

This email confirms what many Americans have suspected: The Obama administration is doing everything they can to make sure their worst predictions come true and to maximize the pain of the sequester cuts for political gain.

Likewise, Thomas Sowell observed in a recent [column](#),

At the local level, the first response to budget cuts is often to cut the police department and the fire department. There may be all sorts of wasteful boondoggles that could have been cut instead, but that would not produce the public alarm that reducing police protection and fire protection can produce. And public alarm is what can get budget cuts restored.

The Obama administration is following the same pattern. The Department of Homeland Security, for example, released thousands of illegal aliens from prisons to save money — and create alarm.

The Federal Aviation Administration says it is planning to cut back on the number of air traffic controllers, which would, at a minimum, create delays for airline passengers, in addition to fears for safety that can create more public alarm.

Efforts to give the appearance of sequestration pains also include cancelling White House tours. The White House advised in a recent e-mail,

Due to staffing reductions resulting from sequestration, we regret to inform you that White House Tours will be canceled effective Saturday, March 9, 2013 until further notice. Unfortunately, we will not be able to reschedule affected tours.

Of the cancelled tours, *Human Events* [opines](#), “Funny how all the stuff you can see gets cut instantly when there’s a nickel trimmed from spending, but the bowels of the bureaucracy chug along without interruption.”

In response to the cancellation of White House tours, Representative Louis Gohmert of Texas [proposed](#) an amendment that reads, “None of the funds made available by a division of [the continuing resolution] may be used to transport the President to or from a golf course until public tours of the White House resume.”

Though the amendment appears as a personal shot at the president, ObamaGolfCounter.com reports that President Obama has played 115 rounds of golf since taking office. Heather Ginsberg of Townhall has estimated that 341 furloughed jobs could have been saved had that money not been spent on the president’s golf trips.

But some contend the cancelled White House tours are part of a larger effort, done because the administration needs to deliberately make the sequester hurt as the so-called cuts are too minor to actually deal a blow.

The New American’s Chip Wood [writes](#):



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We are talking about minuscule reductions in the Federal budget. The deal is supposed to reduce federal spending by \$1.2 trillion over the next 10 years. But thanks to the compromise Congress made last month to raise the debt ceiling, the actual cuts this year will be just \$85 billion. And they may be even lower than that trivial amount. Given a federal budget this year of \$3.6 trillion, we're talking about a measly 2.36 percent reduction.

Guess what? Even if every nickel of those cuts takes place, the Federal behemoth will still spend more money this year than it did last year. And please keep in mind that even with the \$600 billion in tax increases Obama got last month, we will still need to borrow over \$1 trillion this year so Uncle Sam can keep writing all of those checks.

In other words, the sequester would scale back just one in every six dollars of discretionary spending *increases* since 2008. And spending in 2008 had already been "tremendously inflated — having increased by more than 60 percent over the previous eight years," observes *Forbes*.

Rather than being the "devastating" blow that the White House has purported, the sequester ultimately is not even a cut, but a *growth rate reduction* following years of unsustainable spending.

Perhaps there is no clearer evidence that the sequestration's impact has been exaggerated than the posting of 400 new federal jobs on the Monday following the sequestration.

The *Washington Times* [writes](#):

The [U.S. Forest Service](#) on Monday posted help-wanted ads for a few good men and women to work as "recreation aides" this summer, the [Internal Revenue Service](#) advertised for an office secretary in Maryland, the U.S. Mint wanted 24 people to help press coins, and the [Agriculture Department](#) said it needs three "insect production workers" to help grow bollworms in Phoenix.

As far as the leaked e-mail, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack denied that the administration had a policy of maximizing the impact of the sequestration. "I wouldn't say that we've said no to flexibility," he stated, "but there are certain circumstances where we don't have flexibility."



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