



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on September 3, 2012

## Congress Probes Obama Green Stimulus Funds for MSNBC

Lawmakers are investigating the Obama administration's controversial decision to purchase over 100 advertisements touting so-called "green jobs" on the far-left MSNBC cable television outlet using "stimulus" funds, raising serious questions among analysts about misappropriation of taxpayer money to reward allies of the president who parrot White House talking points. No other TV media channels received similar contracts and no jobs were "created."



The dubious Obama-friendly commercials touting "green" stimulus schemes ran over 100 times on MSNBC, costing taxpayers about half of a million dollars. But after the administration's decision became a public scandal in the wake of watchdogs and media reports exposing it, criticism of the plot is growing. And now, members of Congress want answers.

Republican leaders on the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, which oversees the Department of Labor, are leading the charge. In a [letter](#), the lawmakers demanded access to all documents and communications surrounding the administration's "public relations" contract with McNeely Pigott & Fox Public Relations, as well as details about meetings between officials and the PR contractor hired to tout the stimulus scheme.

"We understand this contract used taxpayer dollars to purchase advertisements on MSNBC during 'Countdown with Keith Olbermann' and 'The Rachel Maddow Show,'" wrote Committee Chairman Rep. John Kline (R-Minn.), Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-N.C.), Rep. Tim Walberg (R-Mich.), and Rep. Phil Roe (R-Tenn.) in the letter. Since 2009, they added, the Labor Department has spent nearly \$2 million with the PR firm to promote its "Job Corps" schemes.

"Despite the fact that these funds were made available as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act — legislation President Obama said was critical for immediate job creation — an examination of public records show that the contract that resulted in the advertisements on MSNBC created no jobs," the lawmakers concluded, asking Labor Department Secretary Hilda Solis to explain herself by September 7. The letter also requested information about which law purportedly authorized spending taxpayer funds on public relations gimmicks by Job Corps.

Another concerned Republican, Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah) of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, has been working with his colleagues on the committee to investigate several other scandals tied to Obama's "stimulus" spending. Now, he wants to know about the flow of taxpayer money to MSNBC, too.

"On the surface, this doesn't pass the basic sniff test," Rep. Chaffetz [told](#) FoxNews.com about the ads, adding that the federal government already spends "way too much" on "advertising" and that the most recent scandal raises questions about "political motivations." He, too, was reportedly writing a letter to the Labor Department seeking more information.

Taxpayer watchdogs that helped expose the controversial "public relations" ploy — the field of PR is



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widely viewed by analysts as akin to propaganda — were up in arms, too. “Hiring a PR firm does not create jobs, and this was obviously meant for selling a particular political agenda,” [said](#) David Williams, president of the Taxpayers Protection Alliance. “The placement really reeks of a political ad rather than a job ad, and taxpayers see through this. Taxpayers would be a lot happier at the end of the day to see a completed road rather than a bunch of ads on cable television.”

The dubious advertisements ran during two disgraced MSNBC shows that have become almost a punch line when discussing media bias. The first one, *Countdown with Keith Olbermann*, was [terminated](#) due its host’s overt political bias after he was caught violating policies on donations. Olbermann had long been criticized for a history of outrageous attacks against anyone whom he disagreed with politically. He eventually went on to work for Al Gore’s Current TV.

The other program to benefit from Obama’s stimulus largesse was *The Rachel Maddow Show*, which has come under fierce criticism for its [distortion of the truth](#) on multiple occasions. Last year, for example, Maddow’s half-baked attacks on state nullification — a legislative maneuver used to reject unconstitutional federal statutes such as the “law” requiring states to return fugitive slaves to their “owners” — resulted in a [barrage of ridicule](#). Scholar Tom Woods and the Tenth Amendment Center both made a mockery of the host and her wild assertions.

The Labor Department claimed the ads were designed to raise awareness “among employers and influencers about the [Job Corps] program’s existing and new training initiatives in high growth and environmentally friendly career areas.” The expensive spots were also supposed to encourage prospective enrollees to join the so-called “Job Corps” to prepare “for an [emerging green economy](#)” in fields such as “[smart meters](#).”

Unsurprisingly, the contract created no jobs.

Still, the department defended its funneling of tax dollars to the blatantly pro-Obama network, saying the decision had nothing to do with politics and was handled by an outside contractor. However, former Labor Department public affairs office chief of staff Rick Manning, who currently serves as a spokesman with Americans for Limited Government, blasted the department’s excuses. “The fact that they claim that they delegated this spending authority to a consultant without oversight is outrageous,” Manning was [quoted as saying](#).

Even media analysts were largely unsympathetic to the administration’s “green” stimulus ad schemes. “If the ads tooted Obama’s horn too much (even a little), then they are definitely taking advantage of the taxpayers’ dollar,” [observed](#) the *Radio & Television Business Report*, a media-industry trade publication. “Bottom line, stimulus money should be spent on putting people back to work, not much else.”

Former “Green Jobs Czar” Van Jones, a self-styled communist, [resigned from his administration post in September of 2009 after a firestorm of controversy](#). It remains unclear whether he was involved in the controversial MSNBC ad scheme at all.

The 2009 stimulus bill, amounting to nearly \$1 trillion, was originally sold to the public as a way to somehow “create jobs.” However, as analysts noted at the time, siphoning money from the productive sector to spend on government programs actually destroys jobs and wealth by its very nature.

More recently, critics have accused the Obama administration of using the taxpayer “stimulus” money to reward political allies such as [Solyndra investors](#), MSNBC, Big Business, Big Labor, ACORN, Planned Parenthood, and other special interests. Multiple [investigations](#) are ongoing.



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“This is just the latest evidence of how the \$831 billion Obama stimulus package was not merely wasteful but arguably corrupt, channeling money to enterprises that were strongly supportive of the Democratic party. Conservatives don’t call MSNBC, ‘MSDNC’ for nothing,” [noted](#) Ryan Robertson with the Media Research Center’s News Analysis Division. “This one may not be on par with ‘Fast and Furious’ or ‘Solyndra,’ but it’s up there.”

It is not the first time similar accusations have arisen, however. As *The New American* revealed last year, many of the biggest establishment media companies — the *Washington Post*, NBC, Reuters, newspaper giant Gannett, CBS, among others — were [receiving billions of tax dollars from an ObamaCare slush fund](#) even as they were busy selling the unprecedented healthcare takeover to the American people. No disclosures were offered.

But Obama is hardly the first president to come under fire for spending taxpayer dollars on so-called “public relations,” either. According to news reports, a 2006 study by the Government Accountability Office [revealed](#) that the Bush administration spent more than \$1.5 billion on “media and public relations.” The GAO also concluded that the White House had [unlawfully disseminated “covert propaganda” inside the United States](#).

Federal law currently prohibits government propaganda aimed at the American people as well as tax-funded political kickbacks. However, it remains unclear whether any action will be taken — and analysts are not particularly hopeful.

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Photo: Phil Griffin, left, president of MSNBC, Rachel Maddow, center, and Lawrence O’Donnell, host of “The Last Word,” take part in a panel discussion on Aug. 2, 2011, in Beverly Hills,

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