



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on October 3, 2011

Obama: I Want My Jobs Bill Back

Obama [submitted](#) his American Jobs Act to Capitol Hill nearly three weeks ago, having preceded it with a [speech](#) to a joint session of Congress in which he repeatedly urged that body to “pass this bill right away.” Since that time the bill has been subjected to much scrutiny and [criticism](#), but no action has been taken on it. Fed up with legislators’ stalling, Obama declared, “It is time for Congress to get its act together and pass this jobs bill so I can sign it into law.”



Obama’s latest shot across Congress’s bow differed little from his previous remarks on the bill. He asserted that the “bill would boost the economy and spur hiring” and that it “is fully paid for.” “Why,” the President asked, “would you be against that?”

There are a number of good reasons to oppose it.

First, it is, in essence, just another “stimulus” bill. As previous “stimulus” laws have failed to pull the economy out of recession, why would anyone expect this one to do so?

Second, the bill, if passed, would at best create enough jobs to reduce unemployment by a single percentage point — and then only long enough to help Obama get reelected. After that, said [Mark Zandi](#), the economist whose projections Obama has cited as proof that his bill will produce jobs, “the plan is a drag on the economy” that will return it to the same shape it’s in right now.

Third, the bill is “paid for” only if Congress also passes Obama’s proposed [\\$1.6 trillion](#) tax hike legislation — something that is virtually certain not to take place. Nor would it be a good thing if it happened: Those tax increases would remain on the books long after the stimulus, if any, had faded away.

Obama laid the blame for the delay in passing the jobs bill squarely on the GOP:

Some Republicans in Congress have said that they agree with certain parts of this jobs bill. If so, it’s time for them to tell me what those proposals are. And if they’re opposed to this jobs bill, I’d like to know what exactly they’re against. Are they against putting teachers and police officers and firefighters back on the job? Are they against hiring construction workers to rebuild our roads and bridges and schools? Are they against giving tax cuts to virtually every worker and small business in America?

It seems likely that Republicans agree with the tax cuts (although some have [voiced doubts](#) about them), though most disagree with the tax increases that Obama conveniently left out of his rhetorical quiz. They should — though many probably do not — also object to federal spending to pay local government employees and to repair infrastructure, because such spending is not authorized by the Constitution. They ought further to resist on practical grounds: Government can “create” jobs only by



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taxing the private sector, thereby destroying other jobs in the process.

Moreover, Republicans, though they have been the most vocal critics of the bill, are hardly the only ones holding it up. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) told Chicago's [WLS](#) Radio that Democrats don't "at the moment" have the votes to pass the bill, either:

The oil-producing state senators don't like eliminating or reducing the subsidy for oil companies. There are some senators who are up for election who say I'm never gonna vote for a tax increase while I'm up for election, even on the wealthiest people. So, we're not gonna have 100% Democratic senators. That's why it needs to be bi-partisan and I hope we can find some Republicans who will join us to make it happen.

Obama attributed opposition to his bill to "politics," which is surely true to some degree. However, the bill itself is just as much a political move as any opposition. It is designed to give the economy a jolt just prior to the 2012 election so that Obama, whose [approval rating](#) is currently the lowest of any President at this point in his term since Jimmy Carter, won't have to move out of the White House for four more years. (That the bill will become "a drag on the economy" after the election is of no consequence to the President, who will either have been defeated or be a lame duck at that point anyway.) In addition, Obama's *ad nauseam* repetition of the need to "pass this jobs bill" in a hurry is also based on political considerations: Zandi remarked that his forecast of an improved economy in 2012 was predicated on the bill's passing, in full, by the end of this year. Should the bill be delayed or passed only in part, any near-term benefits to the economy will be reduced, thus imperiling Obama's reelection — or so the President thinks.

The irony in the situation is that the economy is more likely — or at least no less likely — to improve if Obama's bill does not pass. By denying the President the very legislation that he thinks will return him to office, Congress may, in fact, be doing him a favor. Nevertheless, as the bill would have such negative long-term consequences, it is a chance worth taking.



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