



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on March 4, 2011

Obamas Transportation Budget Drives up the Deficit

You'd never know President Barack Obama proposed a domestic discretionary spending freeze by looking at the 2012 budget he submitted to Congress. According to The Hill's Erik Wasson, Obama's budget includes an 11 percent spending increase for the Department of Education and a 9.5 percent increase for the Department of Energy.



Both of those hikes are dwarfed, however, by the increase Obama is requesting for the Department of Transportation, a point driven home by Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.) during a March 3 appearance of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood before the Senate Budget Committee, of which Sessions is a ranking member. Sessions said he was surprised to see Obama's requests for the Education and Energy Departments, Wasson recounts. But, he said, I was flabbergasted to see Transportation wants [a] 62 percent increase in spending.

Furthermore, writes Wasson, Obama is proposing to pay for his \$556 billion infrastructure investment with an unspecified new tax just what the struggling American economy needs. Even LaHood recognized that raising the gasoline tax would be a bad idea in what he called a lousy economy, but he maintained that other Obama cuts make room for the increase in infrastructure investment, according to Wasson. LaHood declined to offer any specific suggestions for the new tax, leading Sessions to remark that the tax is another huge gimmick in the budget of the sort that has put us in the financial crisis we are in. We cannot continue it. We cannot continue to authorize spending based on a tax that is not going to be collected, probably.

This unspecified new tax, by the way, is only projected to raise \$435 billion, putting Obama's infrastructure plan \$121 billion in the hole. In addition, in order to raise that kind of money, the government will have to tax the middle class, precisely the thing candidate Obama said he would not do.

Wasson also points out that the tax would be necessary, in part, because the gasoline tax used to fund the highway trust fund is collecting less revenue than projected due to increasing fuel efficiency. If nothing else can convince the feds to relax their [deadly Corporate Average Fuel Economy standards](#), which have mandated greater fuel efficiency at the expense of passenger safety, this just might.

LaHood, naturally, chose to portray the massive new spending as a jobs bill that is necessary to reduce unemployment, Wasson writes. Of course, if government spending reduced unemployment, the United States wouldn't have a single person out of work today. Moreover, while the infrastructure spending will



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undoubtedly spur employment in certain industries, the money stolen from taxpayers to generate these new jobs will then no longer be available to create jobs in other industries. No one will see those lost jobs, but everyone will see the ones government spending has created, which will surely buy Obama some votes in 2012.

Sessions was correct to label the Transportation Department budget a gimmick. The whole Obama budget, in fact, is one big gimmick, which Sessions also accurately said doesn't pay down a dime of the debt, as Wasson paraphrased his remarks. Instead of acceding even partially to Obama's requests for gigantic spending increases, Congress should adopt Sen. Rand Paul's (R-Ky.) plan to [cut \\$500 billion from the entire budget](#), including major reductions in the budgets for the Departments of Education, Energy, and Transportation. Better still, legislators should stand by their oath of office to uphold the Constitution and completely eliminate these departments along with many other federal departments and agencies. That, not budgetary gimmicks, is the only way the federal debt monster will be tamed.



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